

Turkish forces kill 18 Kurd rebels

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Turkish armed forces' operations in the south-eastern province of Batman have left 18 Kurdish separatist fighters and three Turkish soldiers dead, the Anatolian news agency reported Saturday. Ten rebels and three Turkish soldiers were killed in fighting on Saturday and eight rebels in clashes on Friday, local authorities said. The rebels were described as "terrorists", the official Turkish term for members of the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) which has been fighting for a separate Kurdish state since 1984. Twenty PKK fighters were reported dead after clashes in the provinces of Van and Diyarbakir on Thursday. Some 15,000 Turkish troops and 2,000 pro-government Kurds are currently mounting an assault in the north of Iraq with the aim of destroying PKK rear bases on Iraqi territory.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الراي"

Moderates, conservatives clash in Iran

TEHRAN (R) — Clashes between conservatives and moderates disrupted a prayer gathering in a central Iranian city, which has been a site of recent political unrest, newspapers said on Saturday. The daily Salam said hardline opponents of Isfahan's moderate Friday prayer leader, Ayatollah Jaleddin Taheri, clashed with his supporters on Friday. The newspaper said protesters demanded the resignation of Mr. Taheri, a key supporter of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, and also called for the resignation of two moderate ministers. Mr. Taheri has come under fire from hardliners for his vocal criticism of attacks on moderate newspapers and cinemas showing films deemed immoral by hardliners. The clashes are part of a sharpening conflict between those backing the moderate Khatami and conservatives fearing the abandonment of Islamic principles.

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Efforts to convene Arab summit intensify UAE supports efforts to convene summit; Saudi crown prince travels to Syria today

Agencies

THE UNITED Arab Emirates (UAE) supports efforts to convene an Arab summit on stalled Middle East talks, its minister of state for foreign affairs said on Saturday.

"The UAE president stressed the necessity to hold an urgent expanded Arab summit to address the challenges facing the Arab nation after the stalled peace process," Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahayan said in remarks reported by the official WAM news agency.

He spoke after a meeting in Abu Dhabi on Saturday between UAE President Sheikh Zaid Bin Sultan Al Nahayan and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

President Arafat, who made a surprise visit to Saudi Arabia on Monday, flew to Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

UAE president to discuss a summit, WAM said.

The Palestinian leader, frustrated by Washington's failure to revive the peace process, has been pushing for an Arab summit to take a unified stand.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah travels to Syria on Sunday on a trip that will also take him to Jordan as part of stepped-up efforts to convene a summit.

Arab diplomats in Riyadh and Saudi newspapers said on Saturday that he would try to resolve a dispute between Jordan and Syria on a summit venue.

"Prince Abdullah will be trying to clear the atmosphere between Amman and Damascus in preparation for an Arab summit," one diplomat said.

Saudi newspapers said the crown prince would

go to Amman on Monday on his first visit to Jordan in nearly 10 years. There was no official word from Riyadh about the trip.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa arrived in Jeddah on Saturday with a message to Saudi Arabia's King Fahd from President Hosni Mubarak, said a diplomat at Egypt's embassy in Riyadh.

The moves were the latest in intense contacts by Arab leaders to try to organise the summit, which Saudi newspapers said several Arab leaders had agreed to in principle. But details of how many leaders would be invited remained sketchy.

The London-based newspaper Asharq Al Awsat said that while Syria wanted the summit to be in Damascus, Jordan was demanding that it be in Saudi Arabia or Egypt.

It quoted diplomats and

observers as saying that Jordan, which in 1994 signed a peace treaty with Israel, was worried that Syria might influence the summit to adopt "hard-line" stands such as ending normalisation of relations with the Jewish state.

"Prince Abdullah's visit to Jordan... will try to persuade Amman to end its reservations and worries over a possible Syrian influence on Arab decision-making," Reuters quoted the newspaper as saying.

Okaz newspaper reported that relations between Syria and Jordan were "lukewarm," but gave no details.

King Hassan of Morocco discussed ways to revive Middle East peace efforts with President Mubarak in Cairo earlier this week and Mr. Musa visited Jordan.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister said on Wednesday

day that Arabs were discussing a possible summit.

Israel has rejected a U.S. plan for it to hand over a further 13.1 per cent of West Bank land to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) under a peace deal. Israel says the transfer would endanger its security. The Palestinians have accepted the proposal.

Meanwhile, in Ramallah, the Palestinian cabinet called for international sanctions to be slapped on Israel to punish it for its hard line in the deadlocked Middle East peace process.

"We ask that the international community take economic and political measures against Israel to penalise the arrogant policy of its government," the cabinet said in a statement after its weekly meeting.

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His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Saturday pose for a group photo with veteran industrialists who were honoured by the King at a special ceremony hosted by the Amman Chamber of Industry (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King honours industrialists

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday honoured 99 veteran industrialists by presenting them with shields and certificates of merit in recognition of their efforts in industrialising the Kingdom.

The group represented the first major industries which were established in the Kingdom. It also included officials in government departments whose task was closely connected with industry as well as bankers whose institutions provided credit to early factories, in addition to all the former heads of the Amman Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Addressing the ceremony at the Amman Chamber of Industry, attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Amman Chamber

of Industry president, Khalid Abu Hassan, said that under the King's reign major industries like Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, the Jordan Cement Factory Company, the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company, among others were established.

Mr. Abu Hassan noted that under the King's direction, Prince Hassan has been supervising economic and social development in Jordan and guiding the economy towards improvement and greater progress.

He said that the honouring of the industrialists will serve as an incentive for all those involved in industrial production in Jordan.

Minister of Industry and Trade Hani Mulki said that Jordan has now more than

25,000 industrial enterprises employing about 12 per cent of the workforce and contributing to around 22 per cent of the gross national product (GNP).

Dr. Mulki said that industrial exports account for almost 90 per cent of the country's overall exports, earning Jordan JD900 million annually and exporting to 110 countries.

At the end of the ceremony, Mr. Abu Hassan announced the industrial sector was presenting the students of Maharrat Umm Al Hussein (orphanage students) 10 scholarships at Jordanian universities where they can specialise in industrial management, industrial engineering, industrial economy, informatics and environment engineering.

JTC, FLAG sign \$28m agreement

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A \$28 million agreement between the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) and Fibre-optic Link Around the Globe Ltd., FLAG, was signed at the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, Saturday.

Walid Dweik, JTC's chairman of the board, signed on behalf of Jordan and Andres Bande, FLAG's chairman on behalf of the multinational telecommunications carrier. Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Sami Gano was also present.

The agreement stipulates that FLAG build a landing station and provide equipment to link Jordan to its fibre-optic cable that links Southeast Asia with Europe and passes through the Suez Canal. Jordan will be linked via a branching unit that lies 175 kilometres from the Red Sea Port of Aqaba.

FLAG, according to the agreement, will build the landing station in Aqaba within a period of 12 months.

The 28,000 kilometre fibre-optic cable, running from London to Tokyo, has a maximum capacity of eight gigabits per second. The cable carries data communications, transmission, phone calls and television and radio broadcasts.

According to the agreement, JTC will pay \$18 million over a period of 18 months for telecommunications access over an infinite period of time through FLAG's cable and an additional \$1 million annually for operations and maintenance.

In practice, this means that a two-megabyte international circuit running from London to Amman and serving 150 subscribers making calls concurrently

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Pakistan sets off sixth nuclear blast, surpassing India's five Islamabad offers talks with India

ISLAMABAD (AP) — After one-upping India with a sixth nuclear detonation Saturday, Pakistan offered talks with its uneasy neighbour and warned the world's five nuclear powers to wake up to the new nuclear reality.

Pakistan and India now are declared nuclear powers, and Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shahmshad Ahmad said condemnation and sanctions won't change that reality.

Rather he said the world leaders should turn their attention to the dispute over Kashmir, which already is responsible for two wars on the South Asian subcontinent. A third war was fought but over Bangladesh or what was East Pakistan.

"Genuine contribution to peace and security can be made by constructive engagement in the search for permanent solutions," most notably to the dispute over Kashmir, he said.

Both countries lay claim to a united Kashmir. Pakistan wants a vote held on both sides of the disputed border to let Kashmiris decide whether to see a

united Kashmir join Pakistan or India.

India says its half of Kashmir is non-negotiable.

Pakistan detonated a single nuclear device on Saturday and five nuclear devices on Thursday, in response to India's testing nearly two weeks ago of five nuclear devices.

"Our decision to exercise the nuclear option was an expression of self-defence," said Mr. Ahmad.

The six tests were all underground, conducted in the Chagai hills of southwestern Baluchistan province and did not release any radioactivity into the atmosphere, he said.

"Today we have proved our credibility... there are no doubts left any more," he said.

However, U.S. intelligence sources said the explosion was about two kilotons, far smaller than reported.

Mr. Ahmad's statement was laced with conciliatory offers of negotiations. He said Pakistan wants to open talks with India to settle the outstanding issue of Kashmir — the flash point of two of the past three wars

between the hostile neighbours. The time has come for the two neighbours to sit at the negotiation table and "talk peace," he said.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who returned to his hometown in the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore a hero, offered to sign a non-aggression pact and sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, if its neighbour India does.

Pakistan had been under terrific domestic pressure to do its own tests after India conducted five tests two weeks ago. After India's tests, foreign governments issued threats and embassies tried to dissuade Pakistan from conducting its own tests.

Countries around the world condemned Pakistan's test Saturday, and international meetings were planned in the U.N. Security Council and among foreign ministers of the eight leading nations to discuss the nuclear tests.

"Both India and Pakistan need to renounce further nuclear and missile testing

immediately and take decisive steps to reverse this disastrous arms race," U.S. President Bill Clinton said Saturday. The Dutch government said Pakistan's latest test will be taken into consideration next week when the European Union decides what kind of sanctions to impose on Islamabad.

While the United States, Japan and Canada slapped immediate sanctions on Pakistan and India for the tests, many other governments declined to follow suit.

Mr. Sharif on Saturday shrugged off the threats of sanctions against his poor country.

"I have smashed the begging bowl," he said on his arrival in his hometown of Lahore. "From today we have begun a policy of self reliance and independence."

While Pakistan didn't announce a moratorium on testing, the foreign secretary said that Pakistan "has completed its current series of tests."

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Jordanian-Israeli industrial complex to expand availability of QIZ districts

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan Saturday moved to expand the availability of Qualifying Industrial Zone territory with the lease of an additional 500 dunums of land in the Jordan Valley to the Jordan Gateway Projects Company, a Jordanian-Dutch joint venture that has committed to developing the area over the coming years.

Minister of Water Munther Haddadin, who signed the agreement with the Jordan Gateway Projects Company, said that the 500 dunums would be complemented by an additional 300 dunums on the Israeli side of the border. The two plots will be connected by a bridge over the

Jordan River to "facilitate the movement of goods and labour."

A similar agreement was signed with the Israeli ministry of infrastructure and the land authority for the other 300 dunums in February.

"We have very high hopes that this will provide jobs in the Jordan Valley and encourage growth in industry and specialised services," Mr. Haddadin said. "We are excited to know that there is high demand for the [QIZ] project. This has shown that the concept is very attractive to investors."

The present qualifying industrial zone at Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid, designated in March under a bilateral agreement between Jordan and Israel in the pres-

ence of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, created a unilateral free trade zone through which industrialists based in the zone can export, customs and quota free, to U.S. markets. Demand far exceeded expectations, and another 200 dunums are being added to the estate with plans to tack on 200 more.

The QIZ at the Jordan Valley, to be located south of the Sheikh Hussein border crossing, will be constructed by Jordan Gateway Company in three phases, the first of which will accept a first tenant in late 1999 or early 2000, said Gateway General Manager Gil Dekel. The first phase investment will be \$70-80

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Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinians: One partner too many

By Ghadeer Taber
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — When it comes to doing business between Jordanians and Palestinians, Israel's strong hand can be a spoiler. But this is not the only obstacle hindering bilateral trade.

A Jordanian water bottling company run by former army General Mashhoor Hadithi recently tried to export its products to the Palestinian self-rule areas.

But when Israel insisted on having the label in Hebrew, the deal was called off by the two sides.

"Trade between Jordan and the Palestinian areas is not a bilateral issue," said a senior Jordanian official. "Israel is a central player in our trade relations with the Palestinians, imposing tariffs and standards, with very few exceptions."

Israel has legitimised its economic grip over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under provisions in the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo interim peace deal signed in 1993 and an ensuing economic cooperation accord signed in Paris which effectively established a customs union between

Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

By maintaining control over borders, using security as a pretext and imposing tariff and non-tariff barriers, Israel has tightened its stranglehold on the fledgling Palestinian economy and retained its multi-billion dollar captive market by minimising competition from other countries.

But Jordanian and Palestinian officials say Israel is not alone to be blamed for low trade levels.

They argue that both governments and private sectors have a role to play in changing the current status quo.

Despite tough Israeli restrictions, they say the Jordanians and the Palestinians have to put their houses in order if they are to raise their annual trade volume, which today does not exceed \$25 million.

"It takes two to tango and we are not dancing to the same beat," said one economist, referring to lack of "effective" Jordanian-Palestinian coordination at all levels.

Jordan, whose other natural markets, the Gulf states and Iraq, have been virtually closed since the 1991 Gulf War, is looking

eagerly to the West Bank where potential trade could reach over \$500 million if Israeli restrictions are eased.

But so far, and after three years of negotiations, Jordan last year managed to send \$9 million worth of goods to the territories. "The potential for Jordan is great," said another leading economist. "For example Jordan exported in 1997 nearly 100,000 tonnes of cement to the Palestinian areas, whereas the Israeli company Neshar sold the Palestinians over 1.2 million tonnes." The economist noted that Jordan, even under the agreements, could export up to 400,000 tonnes of cement.

While the Israeli-Palestinian agreements impose few restrictions on Palestinian exports, imports are a different story.

All Palestinian imports must meet tough Israeli standards and specifications and are subject to Israeli custom tariffs rendering products from Jordan and other trading partners no longer competitive.

The only exceptions to such conditions are contained in agreed upon Israeli-Palestinian lists, A1, A2 and B, which exempt certain items at specific quantities from customs tariff and standards.

"So in reality, it is Israel that is importing the products into the Palestinian-ruled areas," said a Jordanian official.

"Our only window of opportunity is to export through the lists during the interim period and you could imagine how restrictive these lists are in terms of the items and the quotas."

Even then, Israel only allows 26 trucks per day across the battered King Hussein Bridge spanning across the Jordan River.

Israel has so far not agreed to a door-to-door transport arrangement similar to the one in place between Jordan and Israel. Persistent transport delays have long left truck loads of goods to rot under the sun.

"We are working very hard to increase our trade volume with the Palestinians," said Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki. "But in the absence of Israeli transparency and set rules, trade is obstructed even before it begins," said Dr. Mulki, who is trying to schedule a trilateral Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian meeting to discuss trade impediments.

"There is too much risk and uncertainty if Israel is changing the rules everyday." But Jordanians and Palestinians say both

sides must have the political will to seriously advance their trade relations.

"Israel certainly plays a role in hindering free trade between us and the PNA but I am not convinced that it is solely responsible for the negligible trade volume," Senator Taber Kanaan told a symposium organised by the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation on the century-old Arab-Israeli conflict.

"There must be a deep dialogue between Jordan and the PNA to change the status quo."

Jordanian politicians admit the political will to coordinate and increase the minuscule trade levels has been absent with both sides paying more attention to their relations with Israel with the three sides often pursuing conflicting policies because of different interests.

"So far the political will from the Palestinian leadership to untangle itself from Israeli control is not there," said a leading Palestinian official.

"The PNA imports its fuel,

(Continued on page 7)

هنا من الأصل

Iran says United States faces 'legitimacy crisis' in Mideast

TEHRAN (R) — A senior Iranian foreign ministry official said in remarks published on Saturday the United States faces a "legitimacy crisis" in the Muslim world and Middle East because of its unconditional support for Israel.

"The U.S. has encountered a legitimacy crisis in the world of Islam, especially in the Middle East," said Sadeq Kharrazi, a senior foreign ministry adviser and former ambassador to the United Nations.

"The biggest mistake made by the U.S. is its unconditional endorsement of the Zionist regime [Israel] which goes beyond customary norms and is outside global logic," he was quoted as saying by the English-language Iran Daily.

"This crisis can seriously threaten American might and its regional status," Mr. Kharrazi was chief

planner of last December's Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit, widely viewed as a critical turning point in Iran's relations with key Muslim states, strained by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.

The well-attended Tehran summit contrasted with the sparsely-attended U.S.-backed Doha summit, MENA, intended to drum up support for the faltering Middle East peace process, one month earlier.

Mr. Kharrazi reiterated the call made last year by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami for a dialogue between Iranian and American people, but made no mention of official contacts.

Washington welcomed the Iranian call for people-to-people contacts and "dialogue among civilisations" made by Mr. Khatami in a television interview with the U.S. Cable News Network

(CNN) in December, but has said it prefers government-to-government contacts.

Since the election of Mr. Khatami last year, ties between Iran and the United States have warmed slightly, but differences remain.

"One can perhaps say that the issue of dialogue among civilisations is symbolic of Tehran's clear stand towards the world community, especially the U.S.," Mr. Kharrazi said.

"Despite Iran's obvious position, the U.S. is still incapable of understanding its implications and keeps insisting on the old American policies," he said.

Mr. Kharrazi welcomed the steady stream of American scholars and journalists who have visited Iran recently, saying they had contributed to transforming Iran's image positively in the U.S.



A soldier with the Sudan People's Liberation Army passes a group of displaced civilians who were chased from their homes after an attack by militia forces loyal to the Khartoum government. Aid workers said the attack left hundreds dead and thousands homeless. The homeless are now living in the surrounding swamps and surviving only on water lily roots (Reuters photo)

Rebels say 300 government troops killed in battles in east Sudan

CAIRO (AP) — Rebels have killed 300 government soldiers and wounded 500 more in battles in eastern Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said Saturday.

The battles began Thursday when brigades of the national army engaged rebel forces southeast of Damazin in a region close to Ethiopia, said Yasser Arman, the SPLA representative in Cairo.

The city of Damazin controls the nearby Roseires dam, which provides 80 per cent of Khartoum's electricity. It lies

about 500 kilometres southeast of Khartoum.

The report could not be independently confirmed. There was no immediate response from the government.

In another area of the battlefield, Sudanese President Omar Bashir visited the capital of the southwestern province of Bahr Al Ghazal on Thursday to demonstrate the government's control of Wau, which the SPLA claimed to have captured in January.

Mr. Arman said that in the first battle Thursday rebel

forces "intercepted" a government brigade near Samara. A total of 300 government soldiers died and 500 more were wounded.

The rebels also captured 12 government troops, two T-55 tanks and 11 trucks "in good condition," Mr. Arman said.

In the second battle, the rebels "contained" an attack by a second government brigade on their base at Baldigou. Mr. Arman said he had no casualty figures for this engagement.

Mr. Arman gave no figures for SPLA casualties.

22 Iranian drug smugglers killed

TEHRAN (AP) — Twenty-two drug smugglers have been killed and another 350 arrested during a police raid in Iran's northeastern Khorasan province, an Iranian newspaper reported Saturday.

More than 1.5 metric tonnes of narcotics, 54 guns and 6,000 bullets were seized in the Friday raid on smugglers' hideouts in the mountains near the Afghanistan border, the Hamsabahi paper said.

The paper did not say what type of drugs were confiscated.

Large drug hauls are common in Iran. The country lies on a route used to smuggle opium, hashish and heroin from neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan to Gulf Arab states and beyond. Convicted drug smugglers face the death penalty in Iran.

Press group condemns imprisonment of Egyptian journalist

AMMAN (J.T.) — In a letter sent to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Saturday, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) strongly protested the recent appellate court ruling against journalist Amer Abdul Hadi Nassef, who was sentenced to three months in prison for allegedly libelling a noted Egyptian writer.

According to a CPJ statement made available to the Jordan Times, Mr. Nassef is the fourth Egyptian journalist to be imprisoned for defamation in 1998. He is currently serving his sentence in Torah Mazraa Prison along with colleagues Magdy Hussein and Mohammad Hilel of the bi-weekly Al Sha'b and Gamal Fahmy of the now-defunct weekly Al Dostour and the weekly Al Arabi.

Mr. Hussein, Mr. Hilel, and Mr. Fahmy were also convicted of defamation and are serving prison terms ranging from

six months to one year, the statement said.

According to the Cairo-based Center for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), at least 72 editors and reporters are threatened by the prospect of imprisonment for publication offences in cases that are either awaiting trial or are under investigation.

"Democratic societies do not imprison journalists for what they publish," said William A. Orme, Jr., CPJ executive director. "The fact that dozens of other reporters and editors are also facing criminal prosecution makes this recent spate of jailings all the more troubling."

"We urge the Egyptian government to abide by accepted democratic norms and end all criminal prosecutions of journalists for libel. We also call on the government to free those journalists now imprisoned as a result of their reporting."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran's speaker faces reelection Sunday

TEHRAN (AFP) — The speaker of the Iranian parliament, prominent conservative Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, faces reelection Sunday, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported. MPs will meet in full session for the annual vote in which the two deputy speakers and nine other parliamentary officials will also face reelection, IRNA said. This year the moderate and left-wing minority in parliament which backs Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said it would put up a rival candidate. But press reports Sunday suggested that the conservatives would win reelection unopposed as the minority had failed to agree a rival list.

Egypt arrests two trying to smuggle artefacts

HURGHADA (AFP) — Egyptian patrolmen arrested two Sudanese nationals Saturday who tried to smuggle into Egypt 33 ancient coins, police in this Red Sea resort said. The men were arrested after driving into Egypt from the Shalateen border post and a search of their vehicle yielded 33 ancient Roman and Byzantine coins which the pair hoped to sell in Egypt. Police were unable immediately to provide an estimate of the market value of the coins.

Negotiations to recover chin of Sphinx fail

CAIRO (AFP) — Negotiations to recover the chin of the newly restored Sphinx from London have failed because of British demands for compensation, Egyptian Culture Minister Farouq Hosni said in remarks published on Saturday. "The thorny negotiations between Cairo and London were halted when Egypt refused to accept British conditions for an alternative antiquities piece," Mr. Hosni told the government daily Al Ahrar. Britain also wanted to pick and choose the compensation it was seeking, Mr. Hosni said. He did not elaborate. The chin, which the enigmatic half-man half-lion once sported, has disappeared into the sands of time, with only 13 percent of the original left. Ten percent of it is in the Egyptian Museum while London has the rest.

Saudi prince receives British campaigner

JEDDAH (AFP) — Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz received British MP George Galloway, a prominent campaigner against the crippling U.N. sanctions on Iraq, here Saturday. The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) gave no indication of the content of the crown prince's talks with the MP from Britain's ruling Labour Party. The Scottish leftwinger has made several visits to Iraq — following a visit in April he took a child cancer victim back with him to Glasgow for treatment saying she would otherwise die because of a chronic shortage of medicines resulting from U.N. sanctions.

Woman claiming to be Saddam Hussein's sister arrested in Nepal

KATHMANDU (AFP) — A woman who claimed to be a sister of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was arrested here for possessing a false passport, a news report said Saturday.

"A woman who identified herself as Ansaf Al Sarfi, the younger sister of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, was arrested for trying to leave the Kathmandu airport with a tampered or fake passport," the Himalayan Times said citing immigration director general, Iswornath Pandey.

The woman was travelling with five girls whom she

said were her daughters, the newspaper reported.

They are now being held by police for further investigation, it said. The woman, who was carrying a Dutch passport, arrived in Kathmandu on May 2 from New Delhi.

Pandey said the immigration department of the Netherlands had sent him office a fax message saying that "passport of Sarfi or Aasabi had been tampered with and now it is invalid and a fake one."

He said that the woman "had bought a false passport changing her name to

M.M.H. Aasabi."

The woman claimed that she and her family fled Iraq in 1993 because relations between President Saddam and her husband, a brigadier in the Iraqi army, had soured due to personal differences.

She said her family had been living in the Netherlands illegally since leaving Iraq and had been constantly going in and out of the country with false passports, the paper reported.

The woman said she went to New Delhi where she bought a false passport to re-enter the Netherlands through Nepal, it added.

Millenarian Christians await Christ's 'return' to Jerusalem

By Johan Bodin
Agence France Presse

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Christian millenarians who want a ringside seat for what they predict will be Jesus Christ's return to Jerusalem on January 1, 2000, need only contact Brother David, who is already finding accommodation for them here.

The bearded, 58-year-old American is renting apartments from Palestinians on the Mount of Olives in Israeli-occupied Arab east Jerusalem so there will be enough places to stay for the flocks of faithful he says will gather in the Holy City for Jesus's re-appearance.

"Four years ago, God told me to prepare and rent houses to pilgrims," said David, a member of an American millennialist sect who has lived in Israel for nearly 20 years.

He said there are already a dozen members of the sect in homes he has rented, adding, "In two years we hope to have 1,000 Christians with us."

Five million pilgrims and tourists are expected in the Holy Land for the celebrations marking 2000 years since the birth of Christ, but Brother David is thinking only about those coming to mark Jesus's return and the end of the world.

"We are living in the last days before the return of Jesus Christ. He should return to the Mount of Olives because that is where the principal events of his life were played out," he said without a hint of doubt.

How many apartments Brother David needs is hard to calculate, since even experts have difficulty pinning down the size of the millenarian movement as the fatal date approaches. "In the United States, the hard core of several hundred thousand born-again Christians enjoy considerable influence among the 30 million fundamentalists," said Richard Landes, director of a Boston-based research centre which specialises in millenarian Christianity.

"They fund a number of political missions in the U.S. and Israel," he

adds.

In Arab east Jerusalem, born-again Christians already have a chapel in the Sheikh Jarrah area.

The faithful go there daily to sing hymns celebrating the return of Jesus Christ and to recount mystical experiences.

"Tonight, I saw the Weeping Wall and a door opened up in it and there was a beautiful light flooding out. And I could feel everyone coming around me. Jews and Arabs and Christians coming in to worship," said one particularly ecstatic woman, encouraged on by her companions.

The eschatological hopes of these Christians are pinned on the Mount of Olives where, according to the New Testament, Christ was raised up to heaven in the Ascension.

Brother David, a native of Syracuse, New York, has made detailed calculations to explain why Christ is waiting for the year 2000 to return.

"It is said in the scriptures that 1,000 years is like a day for God. So there were 4,000 years of history before

Christ, then 2,000 years after Christ. So that is six days. The year 2000 marks the start of the seventh day, the day God rested," he said.

"This will be the day of the return of the Lord. And there are signs that show that the coming of the Lord is near."

Prudently, he added that "only God knows" the exact date of the Messiah's return.

If the born-again faithful are busy preparing for the coming of Christ, doctors at Kfar Shaoul psychiatric hospital in Jerusalem are waiting for the year 2000 with their feet on the ground.

"With a massive influx of pilgrims coming from all over the world, we are expecting an increase in cases of Jerusalem Syndrome," says Yair Barel, the director of the clinic.

"Jerusalem Syndrome" is a psychiatric condition in which ordinary pilgrims, overcome by the spiritual experience of the city, start announcing the imminent return of Jesus Christ or else start believing them-

selves to be the Messiah.

Today, the Mount of Olives is a quiet Palestinian quarter, dotted with churches and thronged with tourists vying for its magnificent views of the Old City and its holy sites.

At the popular Ghassam cafe, the coffee drinkers have seen their share of eccentrics pass by and visions of a flood of Christian millenarians awaiting the end of the world leave them unimpressed.

"Everyone has his beliefs and strange superstitions," commented Shuaib Abu Sheitan, a 58-year old radiologist.

"It was God who has created mankind so that he can live, and he is not going to destroy mankind so soon," he said.

Still, Mr. Abu Sheitan is ready to be accommodating. "If I had any room at home, I would gladly rent space to these Christians, they pay well and do not make any problems," he said. "But we Palestinians already have enough trouble finding accommodation for ourselves."

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — Pumpkin Patch
15:20 Cartoon — The Pink Panther
15:30 The Adventures of the Black Stallion
16:00 The American Chart Show
17:00 In The Wild
18:00 Drama — Bone Experience
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — Science Magazine (E-M6)
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Life's Most Entertaining Moments
20:00 Documentary — A Taste of Africa
20:30 Talk Show — Challenges
21:10 Drama — Renegade
22:00 News In English
22:30 Drama — Cornelli
23:59 The History of Rock and Roll
00:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

03:54 — Fajr
05:26 — Sunrise
12:33 — Dhuhr
16:14 — Asr
19:40 — Maghreb
21:13 — Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology
Fine weather conditions will prevail during the day becoming relatively cool at night with temperatures getting slightly lower than average. Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds north-westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be relatively warm and occasionally dusty, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.
Amman 14/26
Aqaba 21/35
Deserts 13/30
Jordan Valley 20/34

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 27, Aqaba 34 Humidity readings: Amman 36 per cent, Aqaba 37 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Halaseh 5519220
Dr. Fadi Al Khatib 5865456
Dr. Rami Sukkar 5856457
Dr. Mohammad Lubadeh 5167914
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairokh pharmacy 4623672
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730

Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 5347632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Fahed Jaber 984549
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdoli Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 7731111
Radio Jordan 7741111

Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 5 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdoli 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafess Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700)

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
09:30 Jeddah (RJ)
09:45 Lamaca (RJ)
10:00 Bombay (RJ)
10:05 Doha, Riyadh (RJ)
10:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:20 Beirut (RJ)
17:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30 Lamaca (RJ)
08:00 Beirut (RJ)
09:15 Frankfurt, Berlin (RJ)
12:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30 Rome, Vienna (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
13:20 Athens (RJ)
21:00 New Delhi (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:40 Damascus (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:15 Beirut (Add) (RJ)
22:40 Bangkok (RJ)
23:15 Jeddah (RJ)
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
01:00 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
06:30 Tel Aviv (LA)
11:00 Sanaa, Ta'iz (Y)
12:30 Jeddah (SV)
12:50 Moscow (SU)
13:30 Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:40 Doha (QR)
19:00 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LA)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
22:20 Istanbul (TK)
23:35 Lamaca (CY)
23:40 Beirut (ME)
01:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
04:15 London (BA)

Princess S osteoporosis

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — HRH Princess Sarah, formerly princess of Jordan, Osteoporosis, the Jordanian Osteoporosis Prevention Society (JOPS) President, said on Saturday that the condition is a "silent killer" and urged women to take steps to prevent the "osteoporosis disease".

"Osteoporosis is a silent killer. It is a disease that leads to bone fragility and increased susceptibility to fractures," said Princess Sarah. "It is a disease that affects many women, especially those who are postmenopausal, and it is a disease that can be prevented by taking steps to strengthen the bones."

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Despite anti Jordanians

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — An aggressive group of anti-Jordanian protesters, who have been attacking the Jordanian Embassy in London, said on Saturday that they will continue to protest until the Jordanian government takes steps to end the "occupation of the West Bank and Gaza".

The protesters, who are members of the "Palestine Liberation Front", said that they were attacking the Jordanian Embassy because of the Jordanian government's support for the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

"We are attacking the Jordanian Embassy because of the Jordanian government's support for the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza," said one of the protesters.

The protesters said that they were attacking the Jordanian Embassy because of the Jordanian government's support for the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Three cigarette factories have set up shop in Jordan in the last several years to meet rising public demand.

In Khartoum 71 per cent of men in Jordan between the ages of 15 and 70 are smokers compared to 37 per cent of women within the same age bracket.

According to Ziad Nagat, specialist in health education at the Ministry of Health, 80 per cent of lung cancer patients in Jordan are smokers.

"The number of smokers who die from lung cancer is 25 times greater than non-smokers," Dr. Nagat explained.

"But if a person gives up cigarette smoking, there is a gradual decrease in the risk

what's going

* Recital of Federico Garcia Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 5.00

* The Arab Common Market, Hameed Shom Foundation, J

* "Graphic — Oil on Paper" by Hameed Shom Foundation, J

* Works by Christian de Perce

Experts seek new controls on Internet child pornography

LYON, France (AFP) — New controls are needed to keep child pornography off the Internet, including the development of new software to bar access to such material, experts decided at a meeting here.

The meeting was staged Thursday and Friday by the international police liaison organisation Interpol at its headquarters in Lyon, in conjunction with ECPAT, a Bangkok-based group fighting the sexual exploitation of children.

It brought together representatives from law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations and the computer industry, concerned that the Internet is being used for harmful purposes by those who wish to abuse children sexually.

"Children die, go missing or suffer from sexual abuse as a result of encounters on the Internet," a statement issued after the meeting said. "Child pornography on the Internet seriously affects child victims for their whole lifetime."

The experts concluded there was a need to ensure

every country had legislation to criminalise the production and dissemination of child pornography via the Internet.

They recommended more police and judicial cooperation, increased training in computer technology for law enforcement officers and education of teachers and parents in how the Internet works to help children use computers wisely and protect them from abuse.

The computer industry should develop software to recognise and filter or block child pornography on the Internet, cooperate more with police in investigating criminal use of the web and agree codes of conduct.

The statement said ECPAT would consider possible ways to give recognition to servers and software manufacturers who initiate "child-friendly" actions.

"We are aware that some sections of the computer industry have been extremely defensive on the issue of child pornography, as if to say 'don't blame us, it's not our fault, we can't

do anything,'" the statement said.

"We wish to make it clear that we do not apportion blame; we are only interested in the protection of children, and we seek to work together with the industry in a spirit of cooperation."

The statement added that ECPAT and Interpol would be seeking a host country to champion the protection of children against pornography exploitation and to launch preparations for an international, inter-governmental conference on the problem at the earliest possible date.

The meeting took place at a former head of CompuServe Germany was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and fined 100,000 marks (\$60,000) by a Munich court Thursday for allowing access to illegal sex sites on the Internet, sparking an outcry by related operators in the on-line sector.

The punishment was handed down to Felix Sommer, 34, in connection with the publication of pornographic material

involving children, animals and violence on the Internet.

His lawyers, who had argued that CompuServe was incapable of checking the millions of Internet pages accessible to its thousands of German subscribers through its service, said they would appeal the judgement.

The main Internet providers issued a joint protest against the verdict late Friday, saying it put intolerable pressure on their managements and threatened all on-line services in Germany.

Without a clear ruling that providers can not be held responsible for the content of the Internet, its growth would be stifled, they warned, affecting the national economy and employment.

While condemning the dissemination of illegal material on the Internet, the providers urged action against those who originated it. The Munich court ruling would leave the real criminals feeling safe, they argued.

Georgia, Abkhazia agree to stabilise volatile border region

TBILISI (AFP) — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba have agreed to take steps to stabilise the situation on their volatile border, Mr. Shevardnadze's press service said Saturday.

During a telephone conversation late Friday, the two leaders pledged to stick to a ceasefire accord signed Monday, which called for both sides to withdraw from the Gali border region, scene of recent clashes between separatists and Georgian irregulars.

Mr. Ardzinba said Abkhazia would not hinder the return of thousands of Georgian refugees who fled from Gali after heavy fighting erupted a week ago.

The Georgian ambassador to Moscow, Vazha Lordkipanidze, will meet a senior Abkhaz representative in Moscow Sunday to prepare a meeting between Mr. Shevardnadze and Mr. Ardzinba, the press service said.

According to the Georgian authorities, at least 239 people died in the clashes between Georgian militiamen and separatists in the breakaway province on the Black Sea.

Georgian parliament speaker Zurab Zhvania said the death toll broke down into 200 separatists, 14 Georgian militiamen and 25 civilians.

Another 30 militia members were wounded and 30 civilians taken hostage by the separatist forces, Mr. Zhvania added.

The Abkhaz forces claimed to have killed around 100 Georgian militiamen.

The situation in Gali remained calm Saturday. The ethnic Abkhaz, a minority in the province before it declared independence from Tbilisi, defeated government troops in a 1992-1993 war of secession which sparked the flight of some 250,000 Georgians.

Tbilisi has refused to recognise Abkhazia's independence and talks on the return of refugees and the province's political status have remained stalled.

Clinton, Jiang in direct phone talks over nuclear crisis

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin and U.S. President Bill Clinton held a direct telephone conversation on the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan and Mr. Clinton's forthcoming visit to China, Xinhua reported Saturday.

The official news agency did not specify the date of the conversation, but said it was the first direct telephone conversation between the two leaders.

"The two presidents discussed the current tense situation in South Asia and agreed the international community should make concerted efforts for peace, security and stability in the South Asian region and for the realisation of the nuclear-weapon-free goal in South Asia," Xinhua said.

"Clinton said that he is looking forward to meeting again with President Jiang in Beijing and stressed that a closer U.S.-China relationship would not only serve the peoples of the two countries, but also produce

a positive impact on the development of the international situation," it added.

Mr. Clinton is due in Beijing at the end of June, although preparations for his visit have been dogged by allegations in Washington of illegal political donations in return for relaxing exports of satellites to China.

The two leaders agreed to set up a telephone hotline during Mr. Jiang's landmark summit with Mr. Clinton at the White House last October.

Indonesia vows to protect ethnic Chinese, no economic assistance

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia vowed Saturday to provide security for ethnic Chinese, the target of recent deadly riots, but ruled out financial assistance to help them cope with their severe losses, a top minister said.

"What they need is assurance that they will be guaranteed safety, security and that they will be treated as Indonesians — and that, we can guarantee," said Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industry Giniar Kartasasmita.

"But naturally they cannot expect fiscal support from the budget because our budget needs to be reviewed, whether they can meet all its target."

Mr. Giniar, however, said the ethnic Chinese community have so far not sought special financial assistance. "I don't think they are asking for special treatment from us like subsidies and special interest rates," he said.

Indonesia's ethnic Chinese account for only

about 3.5 per cent of the country's some 202 million people but they are believed to hold about three quarters of the country's wealth.

The ethnic Chinese minority, as well as non-Muslims, have been the main targets of violence during rioting in Indonesia, including during the two days rampage here in the middle of May.

Thousands of wealthy and middle-class Chinese Indonesians fled the country to other neighbouring countries during the riots which led to the resignation of former President Suharto on May 21.

Thousands of shops and businesses mostly owned by ethnic Chinese were looted or burned during the rioting here and many of those who fled Indonesia have expressed fears of returning and starting all over again.

The economic minister, however, said the Chinese have in the past proven their resilience in overcoming difficulties.

"Usually the ethnic Chinese can overcome their problems by themselves. They have their own network," Mr. Giniar said.

"We encourage them to reopen their businesses again. We are going to make it easy for them to renew the permit. And of course they can access the banking system," he added.

He stressed that the state was "not making distinctions between Indonesians of whatever origin they are."

"That is the policy of the government and we are going to make it very clear that it is going to be implemented."

In an effort to instil confidence on the riot-hit ethnic Chinese community, President B.J. Habibie Tuesday visited various areas, including Jakarta's Chinatown, the Glodok area — hardest hit by the violence earlier this month.

Mr. Habibie Friday also said that the state would not tolerate intolerance between ethnicity, races and religions.

Yank jibe ruled not to be racial discrimination

PERTH, Australia (AFP) — An American migrant who claimed he suffered racial discrimination because other workers called him a Yank had his case rejected by the Equal Opportunity Commission in Western Australia.

But Jon Debellis, 41, who claims workers' taunts forced him to take stress leave and consult a psychiatrist, said Saturday he plans to appeal against the ruling.

Mr. Debellis, who migrated from the United States in 1994, said he found the

word Yank offensive and racist. He said workers at Cullity Timbers in the Perth suburb of Belmont called him The Yank and The F...g Yank.

He claimed he was also the victim of graffiti which read "The Yank's a fag" and "Kill the Yank" in the restroom and work station.

Equal Opportunity Commissioner June Williams said Saturday the word Yank or similar ethnic-based nicknames, such as Pomm (for British people) or Wog (for coloured people), were not illegal.

She has written to Mr. Debellis dismissing his complaint on the grounds it was "misconceived" and added that management appeared to have acted over the abuse whenever it was brought to their attention.

There was insufficient evidence to show that the abuse and alleged acts of victimisation were linked.

Mr. Debellis said he was appealing against the decision because he did not want other workers to suffer in the way he had. "This is not about financial compensation," he said.



A motorcyclist drives amid heavy traffic on a main thoroughfare in Mexico City. Authorities declared a fourth consecutive smog emergency day as a coffee-colored haze smothered the skyline. Poisonous air and choking smoke from forest fires are costing Mexico millions of dollars a day in lost industrial production and extra health costs (Reuters photo)

Smog threatens Mexico City with record emergency

MEXICO CITY (R) — Mexico's health ministry proposed a lower threshold for calling smog alerts in Mexico City Friday, the fourth consecutive day of a smog emergency in the capital.

Poisonous air and choking smoke from forest fires forced Mexico City to extend the emergency to Saturday, threatening the city of some 18 million people with the longest such emergency ever.

The health ministry said in a statement that if approved, its stricter guidelines would set off smog alerts more easily, at lower ozone and particle levels than currently in place.

Under the current contingency measures, half the city's three million cars had to be pulled from the roads, its 60,000 factories were urged to scale back production by a third and children were confined to classrooms while at school.

The last time Mexico City enforced such measures for five days in a row was in October 1996. Reforma newspaper said. Local media reports said if the emergency persisted through the weekend it would be the city's longest consecutive smog alert.

A coffee-colored haze smothered the Mexico City skyline Friday despite the year's first heavy rains late Thursday.

The Metropolitan Index of Air Quality (IMECA) soared above 200 points Friday even with the emergency measures, keeping the smog alarm in place and forcing the city government to reassess its battle against poor air quality.

The IMECA measures ozone and suspended particle levels.

Currently any IMECA level above 250 spurs the smog emergency measures, while anything above 100 on the scale is considered by international standards to be dangerous to health.

The new guidelines would signal a smog alert at 240 on the IMECA scale, and call off the emergency when air qual-

ity drops below 180. It would also trigger the emergency measures when suspended particles measure 175 IMECA, and at a combination of 225 IMECA for ozone and 125 IMECA of suspended particles.

"The criteria to define an environmental contingency is based on epidemiological information and designed to alert the government and society over the possible increase in symptoms and severe illness associated with smog," the ministry said.

A dusty beige skyline and haze over the capital is not uncommon as Mexico City is cradled in a mountain valley at 7,000 feet where air is thin and fumes get trapped.

But this year, pollution has been made far worse by raging fires which have torched much of Mexico's remaining woodland and covered the region from Costa Rica to Texas in a thick pall of noxious smoke.

The rainfall Thursday night drew sighs of relief from residents after a prolonged El Niño-provoked drought that had delayed the summer rainy season by nearly a month.

Health experts say that living in Mexico City can cost you your life, because contamination on any given day exceeds international limits by two to three times.

In addition to ground-level ozone, a poisonous gas caused by car emissions, Mexico City's air has a very high content of toxic microscopic particles, such as metals like cadmium.

The smog not only takes a severe toll on health but has cost the country millions of dollars in health complaints and lost production from the emergency measures.

An estimated 500,000 Mexico City residents suffered some sort of health problem because of smog, according to Gustavo Olaz Fernandez, environment health director at the health ministry.

EPA finds car smog controls boost greenhouse gases

WASHINGTON (R) — Automobile catalytic converters that have helped clear the nation's smog have an unwanted side-effect — they increase tailpipe emissions of a heat-trapping greenhouse gas, the Environmental Protection Agency said in a draft study released Friday.

By breaking down smog-forming compounds in exhaust, catalytic converters produce nitrous oxide, a far more potent heat-trapping gas than carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas.

Greenhouse gases, produced largely from burning fossil fuels, are blamed for trapping heat in the atmosphere and changing the world's climate.

Catalytic converters installed to reduce mobile source pollution have unintentionally promoted the formation of N₂O or nitrous oxide, the EPA draft study said.

"As the number of catalytic converter-equipped vehicles has risen in the U.S. motor vehicle fleet, so have emissions of N₂O," it said.

The EPA estimated nitrous oxide from catalytic converters accounts for about 2 per cent of U.S. gases causing global warming.

Overall nitrous oxide emissions — which the study said are 310 times more powerful heat-trappers than carbon dioxide — account for 7.2 per cent of U.S. greenhouse gases.

From 1990 to 1996, the study said combined nitrous oxide emissions from stationary and mobile sources rose by more than 44 per cent, "primarily due to increased rates of N₂O generation in new vehicles."

While the EPA said the draft study raised a concern, it said the findings were not conclusive and that converters could be redesigned to fix the apparent problem.

"We're hopeful that changes in the precious metals that you use in the catalysts can be adjusted to change the gases that are formed," said an EPA official, who asked not to be named.

"The findings (from the study) are out for public

comment and the EPA itself is doing more research," he said.

In a prepared statement, the agency said it will "work with automakers, if necessary, to ensure that advanced catalysts fight smog without contributing to climate change problems."

The EPA said there still were "major scientific uncertainties about the contributions that catalytic converters may make to greenhouse gases."

The international scientific panel guiding efforts to develop policies to fight climate change has said that "nitrous oxide from internal combustion engines is not well understood and data on emissions are scarce," the EPA statement noted.

The panel of scientists also considers smog — which catalytic converters reduce — a powerful greenhouse gas.

A spokeswoman for Ford Motor Co., questioned the EPA draft's findings, and said its cars and trucks emit far less nitrous oxide than the EPA calculated.

"We think the numbers in the study are overstated," said Ford spokeswoman Karen Holschneider. "Yes, we know that there would be some N₂O emissions" with the introduction of catalytic converters," she said. "Our dispute is not with the premise, but with the scope of the problem."

Because of government regulations to reduce other pollutants, research has not been focused on N₂O, but on making catalysts last longer, and heat up faster for better cold-start performance, Michael Brady, an engineering specialist with Chrysler's advanced engine systems development group, said.

He said it would be difficult to make a converter that produced no nitrous oxide.

In the past 200 years, nitrous oxide emissions mainly from burning fossil fuels, farming, livestock manure, fertilizer production and nylon production — have raised nitrous oxide concentrations in the atmosphere by 13 per cent, the EPA said.

Ferocious battles grip Sri Lanka, death toll mounts

COLOMBO (AFP) — Fierce fighting raged in northern Sri Lanka Saturday as 18 soldiers and an unspecified number of Tamil Tiger rebels were killed, defence sources and rebels said.

Long-range artillery and mortar bombs attacks continued near the rebel-held town of Mankulam, the defence ministry said in a statement Saturday adding that troops were dominating areas ahead of their defence lines.

Defence sources said 13 soldiers were killed late Friday in a clash with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas adding to the loss of five soldiers who were killed on the previous day when fighting erupted.

Five more soldiers were shot dead by the Tiger rebels in the east of the country Saturday, officials said.

Meanwhile, the LTTE in a statement from its London office said it was able to resist a two-pronged advance mounted by the military on the rebel-held town of Mankulam.

The LTTE statement said the Tigers beat back one column while there was heavy fighting with the

other. "LTTE forces are putting up stiff resistance firing mortars and artillery shells and the battle is still continuing," it said.

The Tigers said they found the body of a government soldier and claimed they had lost only one of their fighters since fighting broke out Thursday.

However, the defence ministry said 25 to 30 rebels were either killed or wounded in the latest bout of fighting that also claimed the lives of at least five soldiers and left more than 50 wounded Thursday.

The defence ministry here said Friday that the army fired a barrage of artillery towards suspected rebel positions and the rebels retaliated with mortars.

The military used helicopter gunships to attack the LTTE, the officials said.

Tiger guerrillas are fighting for independence for the north and east, where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 55,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past 25 years.

Experts seek new controls on Internet child pornography

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The meeting was staged Thursday and Friday by the international police liaison organisation Interpol at its headquarters in Lyon, in conjunction with ECPAT, a Bangkok-based group fighting the sexual exploitation of children.

It brought together representatives from law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations and the computer industry, concerned that the Internet is being used for harmful purposes by those who wish to abuse children sexually.

"Children die, go missing or suffer from sexual abuse as a result of encounters on the Internet," a statement issued after the meeting said. "Child pornography on the Internet seriously affects child victims for their whole lifetime."

The experts concluded there was a need to ensure

every country had legislation to criminalise the production and dissemination of child pornography via the Internet.

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The computer industry should develop software to recognise and filter or block child pornography on the Internet, cooperate more with police in investigating criminal use of the web and agree codes of conduct.

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"We are aware that some sections of the computer industry have been extremely defensive on the issue of child pornography, as if to say 'don't blame us, it's not our fault, we can't do anything,'" the statement said.

"We wish to make it clear that we do not apportion blame: we are only interested in the protection of children, and we seek to work together with the industry in a spirit of cooperation."

The statement added that ECPAT and Interpol would be seeking a host country to champion the protection of children against pornography exploitation and to launch preparations for an international, inter-governmental conference on the problem at the earliest possible date.

The meeting took place as a former head of CompuServe Germany was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and fined 100,000 marks (\$60,000) by a Munich court Thursday for allowing access to illegal sex sites on the Internet, sparking an outcry by related operators in the on-line sector.

The punishment was handed down to Felix Sommer, 34, in connection with the publication of pornographic material

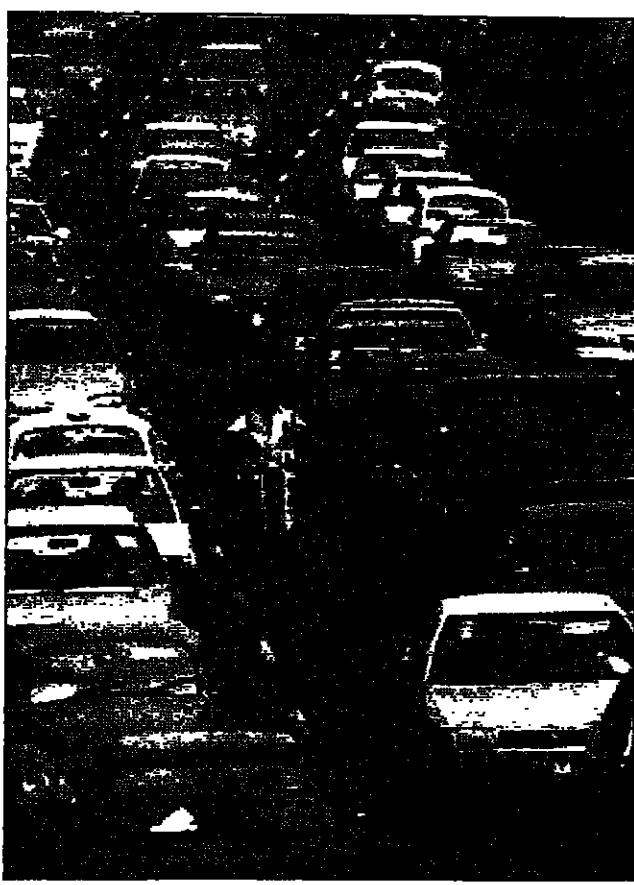
involving children, animals and violence on the Internet.

His lawyers, who had argued that CompuServe was incapable of checking the millions of Internet pages accessible to its thousands of German subscribers through its service, said they would appeal the judgement.

The main Internet providers issued a joint protest against the verdict late Friday, saying it put intolerable pressure on their managements and threatened all on-line services in Germany.

Without a clear ruling that providers can not be held responsible for the content of the Internet, its growth would be stifled, they warned, affecting the national economy and employment.

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EPA finds car smog controls boost greenhouse gases

WASHINGTON (R) — Automobile catalytic converters that have helped clear the nation's smog have an unwanted side-effect — they increase tailpipe emissions of a heat-trapping greenhouse gas, the Environmental Protection Agency said in a draft study released Friday.

By breaking down smog-forming compounds in exhaust, catalytic converters produce nitrous oxide, a far more potent heat-trapping gas than carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas.

Greenhouse gases, produced largely from burning fossil fuels, are blamed for trapping heat in the atmosphere and changing the world's climate.

Catalytic converters installed to reduce mobile source pollution have unintentionally promoted the formation of N₂O or nitrous oxide, the EPA draft study said.

"As the number of catalytic converter-equipped vehicles has risen in the U.S. motor vehicle fleet, so have emissions of N₂O," it said.

The EPA estimated nitrous oxide from catalytic converters accounts for about 2 per cent of U.S. gases causing global warming.

Overall nitrous oxide emissions — which the study said are 310 times more powerful heat-trappers than carbon dioxide — account for 7.2 per cent of U.S. greenhouse gases.

From 1990 to 1996, the study said combined nitrous oxide emissions from stationary and mobile sources rose by more than 44 per cent, "primarily due to increased rates of N₂O generation in new vehicles."

While the EPA said the draft study raised a concern, it said the findings were not conclusive and that converters could be redesigned to fix the apparent problem.

"We're hopeful that changes in the precious metals that you use in the catalysts can be adjusted to change the gases that are formed," said an EPA official, who asked not to be named.

"The findings (from the study) are out for public comment and the EPA itself is doing more research," he said.

In a prepared statement the agency said it will "work with automakers if necessary, to ensure that advanced catalysts fight smog without contributing to climate change problems."

The EPA said there still were "major scientific uncertainties about the contributions that catalytic converters may make to greenhouse gases."

The international scientific panel guiding efforts to develop policies to fight climate change has said that "nitrous oxide from internal combustion engines is not well understood and data on emissions are scarce," the EPA statement noted.

The panel of scientists also considers smog — which catalytic converters reduce — a powerful greenhouse gas.

A spokeswoman for Ford Motor Co. questioned the EPA draft's findings, and said its cars and trucks emit far less nitrous oxide than the EPA calculated.

"We think the numbers in the study are overstated," said Ford spokeswoman Karen Holtschneider. "Yes, we know that there would be some N₂O emissions" with the introduction of catalytic converters," she said. "Our dispute is not with the premise, but with the scope of the problem."

Because of government regulations to reduce other pollutants, research has not been focused on N₂O, but on making catalysts last longer, and heat up faster for better cold-start performance, Michael Brady, an engineering specialist with Chrysler's advanced engine systems development group, said.

He said it would be difficult to make a converter that produced no nitrous oxide.

In the past 200 years, nitrous oxide emissions mainly from burning fossil fuels, farming, livestock manure, fertilizer production and nylon production — have raised nitrous oxide concentrations in the atmosphere by 13 per cent, the EPA said.

Georgia, Abkhazia agree to stabilise volatile border region

TBILISI (AFP) — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba have agreed to take steps to stabilise the situation on their volatile border, Mr. Shevardnadze's press service said Saturday.

During a telephone conversation late Friday, the two leaders pledged to stick to a ceasefire accord signed Monday, which called for both sides to withdraw from the Gali border region, scene of recent clashes between separatists and Georgian irregulars.

Mr. Ardzinba said Abkhazia would not hinder the return of thousands of Georgian refugees who fled from Gali after heavy fighting erupted a week ago.

The Georgian ambassador to Moscow, Vazha Lordkipanidze, will meet a senior Abkhaz representative in Moscow Sunday to prepare a meeting between Mr. Shevardnadze and Mr. Ardzinba, the press service said.

According to the Georgian authorities, at least 239 people died in the clashes between Georgian militiamen and separatists in the breakaway province on the Black Sea.

Georgian parliament speaker Zurab Zhvania said the death toll broke down into 200 separatists, 14 Georgian militiamen and 25 civilians.

Another 30 militia members were wounded and 30 civilians taken hostage by the separatist forces, Mr. Zhvania added.

The Abkhaz forces claimed to have killed around 100 Georgian militiamen.

The situation in Gali remained calm Saturday.

The ethnic Abkhaz, a minority in the province before it declared independence from Tbilisi, defeated government troops in a 1992-1993 war of secession which sparked the flight of some 250,000 Georgians.

Tbilisi has refused to recognise Abkhazia's independence and talks on the return of refugees and the province's political status have remained stalled.

Clinton, Jiang in direct phone talks over nuclear crisis

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin and U.S. President Bill Clinton held a direct telephone conversation on the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan and Mr. Clinton's forthcoming visit to China, Xinhua reported Saturday.

The official news agency did not specify the date of the conversation, but said it was the first direct telephone conversation between the two leaders.

"The two presidents discussed the current tense situation in South Asia and agreed the international community should make concerted efforts for peace, security and stability in the South Asian region and for the realisation of the nuclear-weapon-free goal in South Asia," Xinhua said.

"Clinton said that he is looking forward to meeting again with President Jiang in Beijing and stressed that a closer U.S.-China relationship would not only serve the peoples of the two countries, but also produce

a positive impact on the development of the international situation," it added.

Mr. Clinton is due in Beijing at the end of June, although preparations for his visit have been dogged by allegations in Washington of illegal political donations in return for relaxing exports of satellites to China.

The two leaders agreed to set up a telephone hotline during Mr. Jiang's landmark summit with Mr. Clinton at the White House last October.

Indonesia vows to protect ethnic Chinese, no economic assistance

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia vowed Saturday to provide security for ethnic Chinese, the target of recent deadly riots, but ruled out financial assistance to help them cope with their severe losses, a top minister said.

"What they need is assurance that they will be guaranteed safety, security and that they will be treated as Indonesians — and that, we can guarantee," said Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industry Ginjar Kartasasmita. "But naturally they cannot expect fiscal support from the budget because our budget needs to be reviewed, whether they can meet all its target."

Mr. Ginjar, however, said the ethnic Chinese community have so far not sought special financial assistance. "I don't think they are asking for special treatment from us like subsidies and special interest rates," he said.

Indonesia's ethnic Chinese account for only about 3.5 per cent of the country's some 202 million people but they are believed to hold about three quarters of the country's wealth.

The ethnic Chinese minority, as well as non-Muslims, have been the main targets of violence during rioting in Indonesia, including during the two days rampage here in the middle of May.

Thousands of wealthy and middle-class Chinese Indonesians fled the country to other neighbouring countries during the riots which led to the resignation of former President Suharto on May 21.

Thousands of shops and businesses mostly owned by ethnic Chinese were torched or looted during the rioting here and many of those who fled Indonesia have expressed fears of returning and starting all over again.

The economic minister, however, said the Chinese have in the past proven their resilience in overcoming difficulties.

"Usually the ethnic Chinese can overcome their problems by themselves. They have their own network," Mr. Ginjar said.

"We encourage them to reopen their businesses again. We are going to make it easy for them to renew the permit. And of course they can access the banking system," he added.

He stressed that the state was "not making distinctions between Indonesians of whatever origin they are."

"That is the policy of the government and we are going to make it very clear that it is going to be implemented."

In an effort to instil confidence on the riot-hit ethnic Chinese community, President B.J. Habibie Tuesday visited various areas, including Jakarta's Chinatown, the Glodok area — hardest hit by the violence earlier this month.

Mr. Habibie Friday also said that the state would not tolerate intolerance between ethnicity, races and religions.

Yank jibe ruled not to be racial discrimination

PERTH, Australia (AFP) — An American migrant who claimed he suffered racial discrimination because other workers called him a Yank had his case rejected by the Equal Opportunity Commission in Western Australia.

But Jon Debellis, 41, who claims workers' taunts forced him to take stress leave and consult a psychiatrist, said Saturday he plans to appeal against the ruling.

Mr. Debellis, who migrated from the United States in 1994, said he found the

word Yank offensive and racist. He said workers at Cullity Timbers in the Perth suburb of Belmont called him The Yank and The F---g Yank.

He claimed he was also the victim of graffiti which read "The Yank's a fag" and "Kill the Yank" in the restroom and work station.

Equal Opportunity Commissioner June Williams said Saturday the word Yank or similar ethnic-based nicknames, such as Pom (for British people) or Wog (for coloured people), were not illegal.

She has written to Mr. Debellis dismissing his complaint on the grounds it was "misconceived" and added that management appeared to have acted over the abuse whenever it was brought to their attention.

There was insufficient evidence to show that the abuse and alleged acts of victimisation were linked.

Mr. Debellis said he was appealing against the decision because he did not want other workers to suffer in the way he had. "This is not about financial compensation," he said.

Hunger stunts growth of 40% of poor children

WASHINGTON (R) — Nearly 40 per cent of all children in developing countries have stunted growth due to poor nutrition, researchers said Friday.

In some areas, such as South East Asia, more than half the children are much shorter than they should be, nutritionist Edward Frongillo and colleagues at Cornell University said.

The study does not include China.

"These figures are just the tip of the iceberg," Mr. Frongillo said in a statement. "They indicate that the whole population in certain regions is not growing as well as it should be."

Mr. Frongillo, who reported his findings to the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, said the report was available through the World Health Organisation.

"It is very disturbing that in most of the developing world, a large proportion of children are suffering from malnutrition severe enough today that they are not achieving near their developmental potential," Mr. Frongillo said.

Ferocious battles grip Sri Lanka, death toll mounts

COLOMBO (AFP) — Fierce fighting raged in northern Sri Lanka Saturday as 18 soldiers and an unspecified number of Tamil Tiger rebels were killed, defence sources and rebels said.

Long-range artillery and mortar bombs attacks continued near the rebel-held town of Mankulam, the defence ministry said in a statement Saturday adding that troops were dominating areas ahead of their defence lines.

Defence sources said 13 soldiers were killed late Friday in a clash with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas adding to the loss of five soldiers who were killed on the previous day when fighting erupted.

Five more soldiers were shot dead by the Tiger rebels in the east of the country Saturday, officials said.

Meanwhile, the LTTE in a statement from its London office said it was able to resist a two-pronged advance mounted by the military on the rebel-held town of Mankulam.

The LTTE statement said the Tigers beat back one column while there was heavy fighting with the other. "LTTE forces are putting up stiff resistance firing mortars and artillery shells and the battle is still continuing," it said.

The Tigers said they found the body of a government soldier and claimed they had lost only one of their fighters since fighting broke out Thursday.

However, the defence ministry said 25 to 30 rebels were either killed or wounded in the latest bout of fighting that also claimed the lives of at least five soldiers and left more than 50 wounded Thursday.

The defence ministry here said Friday that the army fired a barrage of artillery towards suspected rebel positions and the rebels retaliated with mortars.

The military used helicopter gunships to attack the LTTE, the officials said.

Tiger guerrillas are fighting for independence for the north and east, where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 55,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past 25 years.

Japan's Socialists set to quit four-year ruling coalition

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Socialists said Saturday they would quit a four-year old ruling coalition with the scandal-tainted Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) due to differences over political ethics and national defence.

"After a series of consultations, we have reached a conclusion to end the coalition," Takako Doi, head of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), said at a meeting with fellow party executives and members of parliament.

The break-up will leave the conservative LDP without a majority vote in the ceremonial House of Councillors. Half of the 252 upper house seats were contested in elections in July.

But the LDP, which returned to power in 1994, an unwieldy tie-up with the long-time rival SDP, has already regained its majority — 261 seats — in the 500-seat lower house by accommodating defections from the opposition.

The lesser ally in its coalition, the centrist New Party Sakigake, is also prepared to part company with the LDP after the current session of parliament ends next month.

"We will be out of the coalition as soon as the parliament session ends," Sakigake leader and former Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura told reporters earlier in the week.

The SDP meeting adopted a statement, blaming the LDP for its resistance to anti-corruption measures and for its drive to expand defence cooperation with the United States to cope with regional conflicts.

The defection was timed to coincide with an opposition move to file a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in protest at his failed economic policies.

But the SDP executive had already vowed to refrain from joining the confidence motion.

The LDP has turned its back to an earlier agreement among the allies to push for an anti-corruption bill aimed at prohibiting legislators from accepting awards from individuals or companies for playing intermediary roles in dealing with bureaucrats.

The accord has come amid a series of scandals in which senior officials at the finance and other ministries were found to have been bribed or wine and dined by leading banks and businesses.

The LDP lost its 38-year-old grip on power in 1993 when many key members bolted the party and formed a renegade ruling alliance with centrist forces and the SDP, then called the Socialist Party.

The SDP, for long the main opposition force with a swing vote in parliament, was alienated from the alliance.

It had no choice but help the LDP back to power in a marriage of convenience a year later with its leader Tomichi Murayama installed as prime minister.

The SDP has won some cabinet posts but compromised its traditional pacifist policy, discarding its aversion to Japan's security pact with the United States.

Its strength has gradually waned to 15 seats in the lower house and 38 in the house of representatives.

Sakigake has two seats in the 500-seat lower house. The LDP has 118 seats in the 252-seat upper house against the SDP's 20 and Sakigake's three.

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This Nagoya-Port Public Aquarium hand out picture shows a hawksbill turtle spawning her eggs in an artificial indoor beach for the first time in the world (AFP photo)

Endangered turtle spawns on fake beach

TOKYO (AFP) — A Japanese aquarium said Saturday it had achieved what it called a world first — getting the endangered Hawksbill turtle to spawn on a fake indoor beach.

The turtle laid 62 eggs this week on a mock beach

measuring five metres by 15 metres at Port of Nagoya Public Aquarium, a spokesman said.

The eggs were moved to incubators.

"We hope this success will lead to artificial breeding of Hawksbill turtles as

they are in danger of extinction," the spokesman said.

The number of Hawksbill turtles has decreased due to reckless hunting for ornamental tortoiseshell.

The babies are expected in two months' time.

Russia says it might back NATO mission in Albania

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said Moscow might under certain circumstances back a deployment of NATO troops in Albania to help contain the Kosovo crisis.

But in a newspaper interview published Saturday, he reiterated Moscow's demand that no such action be undertaken without the authorisation of the U.N. Security Council.

"Sometimes they (the West) say: 'We do not want to raise this issue in the security council because Russia would block it all the same'," Mr. Primakov told liberal daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta.

"Our reaction in the Security Council will depend on whether the proposed measures would be relevant to the situation at that moment."

NATO foreign ministers, meeting in Luxembourg Thursday, approved measures aimed at fostering a peaceful solution to the crisis in southern Serbia's Kosovo province, which is mostly inhabited by ethnic Albanians.

The major powers fear the conflict between Serb authorities and Kosovo separatists could spill over into neighbouring Albania or Macedonia, igniting a wider Balkan war.

The foreign ministers commissioned plans for possible preventive deployments of NATO forces in Albania which NATO sources said could involve 7,000 to 23,000 troops.

No decision on deployment was made at the Luxembourg meeting, which Mr. Primakov attended under a pact giving Russia a special relationship with NATO which was agreed last year as a

compensation for the Western alliance's expansion eastwards.

Despite the deal, Russia remains suspicious about NATO's growing international role.

"We should not create a precedent when NATO acts outside the territories of its member-states without a relevant decision by the U.N. Security Council," Mr. Primakov told the newspaper.

But he made clear Russia was ready to show flexibility in considering the deployment of forces near Kosovo's borders in the Security Council, where it has a right to veto any decision along with other four permanent members — the United States, France, Britain and China.

"If the measure does not

correspond with the situation we will oppose it," he said. "But it may so happen that the deployment would be needed."

Mr. Primakov said Russia did not oppose NATO's plans to hold exercises in areas neighbouring Kosovo, or to train border guards in Albania and former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

But he urged the Western alliance to be extra cautious in drawing the scenario of any planned exercise.

"If, let us just imagine this, such exercises are held under a scenario which envisages rescuing the Kosovo population from ethnic cleansing," Mr. Primakov said, "this would indeed stoke tensions in Kosovo."

Germany ready to take part in NATO force for Kosovo

BONN (AFP) — Germany will take part in any preventive military force set up by NATO in the troubled Serb province of Kosovo, Defence Minister Volker Ruehe has said.

To meet any escalation of violence, he said that "energetic measures" would be required, "such as air manoeuvres and the creation of a military no-fly zone, to be enforced militarily if necessary."

Germany's chief concern would be to prevent a deterioration of the situation which might bring the threat of new refugee flows, Mr. Ruehe told the Sunday edition of the popular daily Bild.

"The German army will not stay on the sidelines if there is a dissuasive military operation to prevent violence," he said, adding: "The time is past when we merely gave advice to others and wished them well."

Germany already takes part in the NATO Stabilisation Force in Bosnia.

Mr. Ruehe came out against any "purely symbolic acts, such as securing (Kosovo's) borders from Albania" which, he said, would merely serve the interests of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

Belgrade has said it must authorise any troop deployment in Kosovo.

Several NATO members, including Britain, Italy, Spain and Greece have expressed reluctance to mount a military operation.

Man-made object spotted in deep space

WASHINGTON (R) — An astronomer in Australia has set a record by detecting a man-made object optically at 20.9 million miles — almost 100 times the distance to the moon, Johns Hopkins University said Friday.

Gordon Garrard of Loomberah, New South Wales, photographed the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR) spacecraft on April 1 through an optical telescope, the university's applied physics laboratory near Washington said in a statement.

The previous distance record for optically detect-

ing a man-made object was about five million miles, set in 1992 when the University of Arizona's 70-inch space-watch telescope saw the spacecraft Galileo.

Mr. Garrard, in a notice posted on the Internet and addressed <http://usrwww.mpx.com.au/gig/near2.htm>, said he was the only astronomer with clear skies during a 10-minute window when the spacecraft's 100 square feet of solar arrays were at exactly the right angle to reflect sunlight to earth.

He said he took five 75-second exposures of the spot in the sky where the spacecraft should be but could not see anything on the images until he added the exposures together.

Just to be sure, he photographed the same part of the sky in the same way the next night and the dot of light from the spacecraft was no longer there.

The near spacecraft is about halfway on its journey to asteroid 433 Eros, which it will orbit and study in January next year.

Travelling at 30,000 mph, it has already covered one billion miles since it was launched on Feb. 17, 1996.

When Mr. Garrard spotted it, it was making its 12th trajectory correction

More than 3,000 of China's 1989 activists still in jail

BEIJING (AFP) — More than 3,000 people are still in jail for their role in China's 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations, including a boy sentenced to 15 years for buying matches, a human rights group said Saturday, ahead of the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Veteran Chinese dissident Qin Yongmin also released a compilation of the 49 dissidents jailed, detained or questioned by police since the start of the year.

"There are still more than 3,000 people in jail for crimes connected with the 1989 demonstrations including 1,000 who have been convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes," the Hong Kong-based Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said. "These people are not famous, and no one bothers with them and we call on the international community to pay some

attention to their plight," it added in a fax received in Beijing.

Focusing on the small city of Shaoyang in central China's Hunan province, the group said nine people remained incarcerated for their role in the demonstrations, including Liu Xin, a boy sentenced to 15 years in jail when he was only 15 years old.

Liu's brother-in-law, Wu Hepeng, was given life imprisonment for setting fire to military vehicles in Shaoyang around June 4, 1989. Liu's own crime was giving him matches, the group said.

It also quoted the family of imprisoned worker Li Wangyang as appealing for assistance after he was returned to jail in Shaoyang during medical treatment. Mr. Li, who was head of the autonomous federation of Shaoyang workers — a group set up during the demonstrations — received 13 years for counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement.

He was released on medical parole in July 1996 because he had heart problems and a goitre, but eight months later he was taken back to Yuanjiang prison in the middle of his treatment.

"Li Wangyang's health is still very bad and he needs to see a doctor, but the prison won't let him," the family was quoted as saying.

"We hope attention can be drawn to his case so he will be allowed to see a doctor," they added.

The main focus of the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations was Tiananmen Square in the centre of Beijing. But there were other protests nationwide, where no foreign media were present and where the crackdown and ensuing punishments were far harsher.

Although two prominent jailed activists — Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan — have been released in recent months, control over dissidents has not lessened over the past nine years,

observers say.

Veteran dissident Qin Yongmin compiled a list of 49 activists questioned, detained or imprisoned in the last five months, including 14 who remained in detention and some with prison terms of up to three years.

The latest detention was of veteran activist Wang Hongxue from the eastern province of Anhui. Police confiscated his identity card after they discovered he was planning to go to Beijing to mark the June 4 anniversary and then detained him Friday, giving his family a warrant for him to be held for 15 days for questioning.

Mr. Qin said the main reasons for continued harassment were police concerns that dissidents might be forming networks across the country, especially since the expulsion of exiled dissident Wang Bingzhang who came back to the mainland in February to set up an opposition political party.

Cult influence on families growing

PHILADELPHIA (R) — Almost 20 years after the mass murder-suicide of followers of the Rev. Jim Jones in Jonestown, Guyana, the influence of cults over family life has grown stronger, experts said Friday.

An increase in the number of children born to cultists has caused an explosion in the number of custody cases in which cult membership is viewed as grounds for denying divorced parents access to their children.

Experts also say cults have stepped up recruitment of elderly people, who have been left on their own because the job market has taken children and grandchildren far away.

"Lots of elderly grandmothers, grandfathers and parents have been left by themselves, and so a number of cults are recruiting the elderly," said 76-year-old Berkeley psychologist Margaret Singer, who has been studying cults for 30 years.

"Elderly people usually have property, a car, retirement money coming in, time on their hands. And they're lonely," she said.

Ms. Singer was a featured speaker at this year's meeting of the American Family Foundation, a Florida-based watchdog group that has been monitoring cult activity since the 1970s.

The foundation, with a half-dozen staff members and 200 professional volunteers, largely consists of former members of cults or relatives of former members.

Herbert Rosedale, a New York attorney and the group's president, accused cult organisations of seeking to dominate weaker members of the family unit, particularly women and children.

The meeting noted that November would mark 20th anniversary of the Jonestown massacre, in which more than 900 people's temple members, 276 of them children, died by drinking cyanide-laced grape Kool-aid at the instruction of their charismatic spiritual leader, the Rev. Jim Jones.

Speakers said the deaths at Jonestown and those of 21 children in the 1993 federal assault on the branch

Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, had not dampened interest in cults.

Experts said the number of cult organisations worldwide had ballooned to as many as 5,000 from 2,000 over the past two decades, with current and former cult members now numbering 20 million.

"There is today a much bigger problem with children, because you're no longer talking about cult members being 18- and 20-years-old," Mr. Rosedale said. "You're talking about people who have been in cults for a long period of time and who are raising children in them."

Experts said that about 2 per cent of children in such states as Pennsylvania lived in an atmosphere influenced by cult activities and beliefs.

Donna Collins, whose parents founded the Unification Church in Britain, was the first child born in the west in the church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Now a grown woman and mother, she said the Unification Church had mistreated her family.

"I learned what religion should not be. I learned that God does not punish us for being human or for being sick," Ms. Collins said of her life after leaving the Unification Church at the age of 25.

"My parents were not aware of what they did to me, because they were motivated by their faith," she said.

A Unification Church member who attended the meeting expressed sympathy for Ms. Collins but said her parents had "overinterpreted" Moon's message.

Speakers were especially critical of cults that turn their back on modern medicine.

Medical journalist Andrew Slotnick quoted figures showing that 172 American children died from treatable illnesses such as diabetes and appendicitis between 1975 and 1995 because their parents forbade the practice of medicine.

"Several children die each year because their parents withhold their insulin — or, in some cases, actually throw out their insulin — because some religious leader says the child is healed," he said.

Study finds aspirin can starve colon cancer

WASHINGTON (R) — Aspirin may "starve" out colon cancer in much the same way as highly publicised experimental drugs cut off the blood supply to tumours in mice, researchers said Friday.

The findings could lead to better treatments for colon cancer — and perhaps even to drugs that can prevent colon cancer in people at high risk. Dr. Raymond Dubois and colleagues at Vanderbilt University in Nashville said.

"There have been several clinical studies now, about 25, that show about a 50 per cent reduction in risk for colon cancer in patients that take aspirin," Dr. Dubois said in a telephone interview.

His team set out to discover why.

Writing in the journal Cell, Dr. Dubois and colleagues said the basic action of aspirin could be targeting the ability of colon cancer tumours to create a blood supply for themselves. New drugs now in development, known as cox-2 inhibitors, may do this even better.

Aspirin interferes with the production of enzymes known as cyclooxygenases, cox for short. There are two types, cox-1 and cox-2. Other related drugs, known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen and Naproxen, have the same method of action.

Among other things cox-2 is responsible for inflammation, while cox-1 helps in blood clotting. Cox-2 is known to be elevated in most colon cancer cells.

Dr. Dubois' team grew colon cancer cells in a dish, and found they started growing little blood vessels. This process is known as angiogenesis.

Drugs that interfere with angiogenesis have received a great deal of attention lately, because of work by Dr. Judah Folkman and colleagues at Boston Children's Hospital. Some of the drugs stop the growth of tumours in mice.

Dr. Dubois' team found that both aspirin and some of the cox-2 inhibitors could also block angiogenesis.

He said his team was now testing the drugs in animals such as mice and rats, and

were finding similar effects. One drug his team has worked with is Searle/Monsanto's Celecoxib, a cox-2 inhibitor, which is expected to go up soon for Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval.

Dr. Dubois said Dr. Folkman's team was doing similar studies. "It has become a very competitive area," he said.

Aspirin worked on all kinds of colon cancer tumours — including those that do not produce cox-2. This suggests that cox-1 is also involved in angiogenesis.

So why not just give aspirin to treat colon cancer — and to prevent it in people who know they are at a high genetic risk of the disease?

"The problem with aspirin is it causes a lot of side-effects," Dr. Dubois, a gastroenterologist, said. "It can cause bleeding from the stomach and it also can cause haemorrhagic strokes."

In fact, NSAIDs cause 7,600 deaths a year in the United States alone.

"That's why everyone is so intrigued by the cox-2 inhibitors, because they don't seem to have those effects," Dr. Dubois said.

"In some situations in animals we see very good inhibition of tumour growth with cox-2 inhibitors," he added. "It was effective in tumours that made high levels of cox-2 — and about 80 per cent of colon tumours have high levels of cox-2."

And the drugs can even prevent cancer. "If we start the mice with the drug before injecting them with human tumour cells, we can block (tumours) almost 100 per cent," he said.

But doctors have no idea what dose would be needed to treat or prevent cancer — or how long the drug would have to be given. Tests on this in animals are underway.

"Relatively soon we might be able to try it in a treatment setting," Dr. Dubois said.

"Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death if you count men and women together," he said. The American Cancer Society predicts that more than 95,000 Americans will die of colon cancer this year.

Stolen Ptolemy atlas recovered in London

PARIS (AFP) — A rare 15th century atlas that was stolen in Paris in August last year has been recovered in London and a French suspect placed under arrest, police sources said Saturday.

The atlas, printed in Bologna in 1477 and valued at between three and

five million francs (\$500,000 to \$850,000), is the work of the Greek astronomer and mathematician Ptolemy.

The atlas, known as Ptolemy's Cosmographia, was "borrowed" Aug. 1 from the French National Library in Paris, by a man who had stolen an identity

card allowing access to rare documents.

Its disappearance was only discovered three months later.

French police were recently alerted to the fact that the atlas had been listed for auction at Christie's in London, where it was pulled from sale at the last

minute just over a week ago.

Police sources said the atlas had been recovered in good condition.

The French man who offered it for sale — claiming that it had inherited it from his grandfather — has been placed under arrest.

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Sum of the parts

THE ARAB World, Europe and the U.S. are all involved these days in a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at finding a workable response to Israel's intransigence on Washington's formula for reactivating the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. Arab leaders are considering convening a summit to determine what they could do to revive the peace talks. Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz will hold talks with His Majesty King Hussein on this particular issue tomorrow after his talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad today. The King had previously exchanged views with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa visited Amman last week for the same purpose.

More important than whether to hold a full-fledged summit or just one comprising the Arab parties most directly involved in and affected by the misfortunes of peace in the area is the agenda and sense of direction of such a meeting. The 1996 Cairo summit deliberated over a similar deadlock in the peace process and adopted a two-pronged approach. One aspect reaffirmed the Arabs' strategic commitment to peace. The other threatened to scale down the normalisation process with Israel as long as there was no progress on the Palestinian front. While there is no going back on the Arab strategic commitment to peace in the region, there apparently are differences on how to go about confronting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's determination to abort the Oslo accords with the Palestinians.

While the Arab side should make it known to the world at large that it is genuinely committed to a comprehensive and equitable peace in the region, it should use whatever tools it has to save the peace process from collapsing altogether. If the Europeans are seriously considering taking "punitive" measures against Israel for its defiant policy, the Arab states should consider a similar but calculated response. Such a response should not, however, remove the ball from the Israeli court and place it in the Arabs'. Furthermore, the response need not be uniform. While some countries have the stature and strategic importance to withstand any pressure put on them by Israel or the U.S. some do not. Some countries, by virtue of their wealth, can also exert influence on the U.S. and its allies; some cannot. It is therefore of utmost importance for Arab leaders to divide roles in a way that complements and strengthens their overall stand.

What is important is to agree on a formula based on sound planning that keeps the peace process alive while directing all the pressure on Netanyahu.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek defended the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty saying it put an end to the state of confrontation between the two sides and secured the return of occupied lands to Jordan. It is true that the treaty did not yield the aspired fruits but it was responsible for demarcating the international boundaries between the two sides, according to the writer. He said those who advocated the cancellation of the treaty are doing a favour to Israel and its prime minister, who will be more than pleased to try to opt for reoccupying parts of Jordan and posing a constant threat to its people. Dr. Fanek said, likewise the Palestinian authority should not cancel the Oslo accords because such a move will give Netanyahu a chance to escape from Israel's commitments and will swallow up the West Bank. He said although the Wadi Araba treaty ended the war option between Jordan and Israel, it did not deny the Kingdom the political option; and indeed the peace treaty gave Jordan wider areas to exercise its support for the Palestinians and for the pan-Arab and international efforts to revive the peace process.

Al Doustour's Oreib Rintawi expressed fear that the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests will open a nuclear arms race in Asia. Despite the fact that the chance of using nuclear weapons by either party is minimal, the tests are bound to encourage other countries like Iran and Turkey to follow suit and possess a nuclear deterrent, said the writer. He said what can Israel do in the face of the growing nuclear threats at its door and will it undertake a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan or Iran as it did in Iraq in 1980? The writer said Israel, which has been instigating a hostile international reaction against Pakistan's nuclear capabilities could be expected to carry out any insane and irresponsible act like bombing the Pakistani nuclear facility. Rintawi said the Arab countries have reason to be concerned with the recent developments, and it remains to be seen whether they would accept the idea of staying outside the nuclear club if they wish to protect their national interests.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Economic growth or extended recession?

Dr. Fahed Fanek

IS THE Jordanian economy currently in a state of recession? To answer such a direct and sharp question we have to agree first on what amounts to an economic recession as defined by economists. Textbooks say economic recession means negative or zero growth in gross domestic product (GDP) for at least three consecutive quarters. We also have to agree on accepting the published estimates of GDP and the official statistics of the national accounts.

Official statistics indicate an economic growth of over five per cent per annum (p.a.) in real terms during the past three years which should lead us to believe that there is no recession in the strictly scientific sense.

But the issue cannot be resolved that easily. Population growth in Jordan exceeds 3.6 per cent p.a. while it is either negative or close to zero in most industrialised countries which produced the above definition of economic recession. The result is that we need to grow at 3.6 per cent simply to maintain per capita share of GDP at the current level. This growth rate in Jordan is the equivalent of zero growth in, say, Germany.

Deducting the population growth rate of 3.6 per cent from the assumed economic growth of five per cent in May 1997 leaves an improvement in per capita share of GDP of 1.4 per cent. The restructuring effect of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, however, acted to reduce private consumption by an average of two percentage points a year in favour of savings, repayment of debt, reducing budget deficit, and accumulating foreign exchange reserve with the

Central Bank. Thus the per capita share of private consumption remained the same or decreased a bit. Citizens were worse off in 1997 despite an economic growth rate of five per cent. A similar trend prevailed since 1989, except in 1992 and 1995.

According to the above, economists applying the standards of the advanced world have the right to deny the existence of an economic recession in Jordan. The government is more than happy to deny such a recession, but citizens have the right to complain of recession because they were squeezed further.

Each one of the above three parties is right in its own way. Consumers are obviously not impressed by the strong arguments put forward by the government and its economists. The IMF staff reports used to show the decline of the per capita share of private consumption in real terms. Their tables admitted a decline of 4.6 per cent in 1993, 5.6 per cent in 1994, an improvement of 2.7 per cent in 1995, another decline of 0.4 per cent in 1996.

We have raised the subject in this column and with the IMF board members who came to Jordan and acted accordingly. Since then that line of data in the table depicting macroeconomic framework removed. What a solution!

Reduction of the standard of living may be a desirable objective from purely macro-economic point of view, it can be seen as a short-term sacrifice by the people for a future reward. But such an argument does not go far with a shop keeper who finds his sales slipping, or a bank finding difficulty in collecting its overdue debts, or a family man or woman who is

unable to satisfy the basic needs of his/her family. Even those who deny the existence of recession admit that the current economic situation is difficult. No one can deny the decline in construction activity, the reduction in the volume of imports, the stagnation in the growth of exports, or the shrinking of tourist groups visiting Jordan.

The fundamentals of the economy are admittedly strong, yet certain macroeconomic indicators are giving clear warning signs. It may be true that the price index of shares on the Amman stock exchange is not an accurate indicator of the level of activity in the economy, yet it is a sort of barometer that no serious observer can dismiss out of hand.

What should be done to alleviate the economic difficulties of Jordan? It should be admitted that nothing much remained to be done internally to invigorate the economy. It would be irresponsible for the Jordanian government to try to create artificial prosperity beyond the country's own means. Such a step may give immediate results on the short-term, but it is not sustainable, and could be dangerous on the longer term. We should, therefore, look externally to influence surrounding circumstances taking into account the fact that fostering exports is the only key for meaningful growth. In this respect we claim that ending Israeli imposed barriers to the Palestinian market, and American imposed sanctions on Iraq seem to be the only way out of Jordan's present economic difficulties. These two objectives should be placed at the top of the agenda of the Jordanian diplomacy.



LETTERS

On land-based inspections

To the editor:

I READ with interest the article that appeared in the Jordan Times on Wednesday, May 27, 1998, headlined "JSAA: Inspections cost Jordan \$3m in surcharge, discourage ships from docking at Aqaba".

Since this article contained few incomplete facts and inaccurate quotations, I presume that I shall have the right to clarify this issue for your good selves and the respected readers.

First of all, the "ground inspections of Iraqi-bound goods via Aqaba" is not a U.N. sponsored operation. In fact it is an agreement between the Jordanian government and the United Nations and British Lloyds' Register to establish a land-based goods monitoring system at Aqaba Port to be carried out by representatives from Lloyds' Register, which was chosen as an international independent reputable maritime organisation. According to this agreement the Jordanian government pays the financial costs of this operation.

The JSAA 1997 annual report has not mentioned at all that this goods monitoring system at Aqaba Port is "discouraging many ships from docking at Aqaba" as the headline of this article states. On the contrary we confirm that it was a major relaxation when the interception and inspection operations at sea were replaced by the land-based goods monitoring operations at Aqaba Port. As this ended the four years of suffering and the enormous difficulties and huge financial losses encountered by most sectors of our economy, which were well covered by the Jordan Times during that period.

Also, I don't remember rejecting any charges by saying "such arguments were promoted by a handful of people who want inspections at Aqaba to continue." What I said was I do not understand what is the relationship between discontinuing inspection at Aqaba Port and the existing inspections on the borders which are carried out by U.N./Lloyds' Register personnel, according to oil-for-food programme, and I still don't understand how it will harm traders and factories that have succeeded to send goods to Iraq despite obtaining U.N. authorisation. Moreover one should inquire why we should have an inspection point for Iraq-bound goods at Aqaba Port, while there is one on the Iraqi side of the Jordanian-Iraqi borders. I should mention here that, although the main mission of Lloyds' Register representatives in Aqaba is to monitor and inspect Iraqi-bound goods, they are in fact monitoring the Jordanian-bound goods as well.

Sufian A. Al Muhaisen
Executive Manager
Shipping Agents Association
(Jordan)

Why Israel needs a Palestinian state

By Shimon Peres

WHEN THEODORE HERZL, the founder of Zionism, spoke of "a people without a land" looking for "a land without a people," he was not aware of the presence of an Arab population in Palestine or its future evolution. His vision, a Utopia unlike anything else in the Middle East, led to an independent state that surpassed anything he could have dreamed of.

A people dispersed, almost lost, came together to be reborn. They returned to their historic homeland and infused it with new life; they revived their old historic tongue and transformed it into a living language; they were victorious in five wars in spite of their inferiority in manpower and arms; they created new forms of life (the kibbutz, moshav, development town); they formed a state in which democratic freedoms were observed, even in wartime; they founded an independent legal system; they created an impressive system of education; they put in place industry, agriculture and services as advanced as those of the most developed nations.

Israel became the only compensation, if compensation there could be, for the Holocaust, the Shoah, which the Jewish people underwent under the Nazis.

But a central objective has not yet been achieved: a global peace with the Arab countries. Still unresolved, the Palestinian question — the pretext for attacks on Israel — remains the principal danger to its security. Its solution would make the Palestinian problem assume its own natural dimensions, but its non-resolution risks lighting a fire which would go far beyond the geographical dimensions of the problem on account of its history, the proximity of the Arab states and the presence within them of a large Palestinian diaspora.

At Oslo, we began Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. The agreements with the Palestinians took on a quite different character from the Camp David accords with Egypt, and from the treaty with Jordan which followed Oslo, because both those countries were already complete entities.

At Oslo, we agreed a way to reach peace with the Palestinians, but there was recognition too of the Palestinian entity and the necessity of making it possible for the Palestinians to achieve independence, an independence which had never existed in the history of the Middle East. It was no longer a question of an agreement on something which already existed; something new was born at Oslo.

At Oslo, it was decided to begin a real reconciliation with the Palestinians. They would win recognition of their national dignity and Israel would be freed of a moral weight on its historic conscience: Israel would no longer control the destiny of another people, which is contrary to our historic conception and has outraged the Palestinians.

In fact, for Israel to remain a Jewish state, both morally and demographically, it needs a Palestinian state. Today, 4.7 million Jews and four million Arabs live between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. Without two separate states, a binational state will come into being, to the great frustration of the two peoples. A binational tragedy would ensue which, in the course of time, would force Israel to stay armed against the Palestinians, whose bitterness could lead once more to terrorism.

At the same time, dividing the land between the two peoples is not easy. There are 24,000-square kilometre between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. Today, nine million people live on this land. In 20 years, the population will double, reaching 20 million, of whom half (if not more) will be Arabs and the other half (or less) will be Jews. Whether the Arabs receive most of the land that they are claiming (about 20 per cent of the land lying between the Mediterranean and the Jordan) or whether Israel keeps the greater part of it, the two peoples will suffer from great pressure on land which will not allow them to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency. Paradoxically, it will be Israel's concern to see that the Palestinians have a modern economy providing their population with a fair income.

We must not allow two different economies to develop: a poor Arab economy offering cheap labour and a rich Israeli economy profiting from that labour. Such a divergence would risk prolonging the conflict and transforming a national conflict into a socio-economic one. To assure a fair future, we need to ensure that we have two states and a modern economy built on the basis of cooperation between two separate states. It is in Israel's interest that the Palestinian state should be modern, democratic and prosperous.

There is the question of borders. The nature of these borders can make the task of drawing them either easier or more complicated. But in reality, these days, borders between states have lost much of their value. A border cannot protect us from economic flows because the economy is now global, founded on a science and technology devoid of all national character. Markets are more important than states and being a player in these markets means competition that has no respect for national borders. This is clear from the texts of new international agreements on customs and commerce.

Borders can no longer stop an armed attack since they make no impression either on missiles or on terrorism. Maginot lines are useless when a chemical, biological or even nuclear weapon is following, not a territorial, but a ballistic trajectory.

Nor can borders block television broadcasts any more. Young people nowadays draw 90 per cent of their learning experience from TV and only 10 per cent from their studies. It doesn't matter if they are Arab, Israeli, French or Japanese.

So putting landmines on borders is pointless. It is better to transform them into opportunities for cooperation and build airports, hotels, industrial parks and even leisure complexes on them. Meetings between peoples are the best alternative to a possible clash of their armies; hotels on borders could be a better guarantee than military bases.

Peace is not the pursuit of war by other means. Peace consists of putting an end to the red ink of past history and starting anew in a different colour. So that the next generation can rejoice in a fresh landscape with a new taste for life and look forward to long years ahead.

It is 50 years since the creation of the state of Israel (and I have just finished writing a book in which I take Theodore Herzl by the hand to take him on an imaginary tour of the country he dreamed of and he is thrilled by what he sees). After these 50 years, it is time for us to put right the mistake we have made: we have not taken into account the existence of another people. And since we live beside this people, it is in our own best interests to complete the historic revolution which we have begun: to see in our neighbours — our good neighbours — the opportunity to forge new relations and bring enduring peace to the Middle East, for the good of the whole world.

The writer is a former prime minister of Israel. This article was translated by Wendy Kristianase.

— Le Monde Diplomatique

After these 50 years, it is time for us to put right the mistake we have made: we have not taken into account the existence of another people.

Feature

Iran dares

By Colin Barr

IRANIAN LEADERS have given the world a public opinion. But Iranian President Khatami appears to have a different view.

The beleaguered reformers' "open meetings" similar to those held by American president to solicit public opinion is an unusual sight in Tehran, a city associated with a reputation for open exchange of ideas. But in an open meeting from his presidential office, Khatami, speaking in a box normally reserved for Friday prayers, engaged in a debate with Tehran University students yesterday afternoon. They staged a demonstration in support of the president.

The president, a former education minister fired from his government in 1993 for his liberal views, is popular among Iran's youth, who prize more freedom. Voting since the Islamic regime, won 70 per cent of the vote in an election a year ago.

Since then, progressives have been seen as a dark despair as they were winning president will survive. Real power, goes the argument, behind the scenes by the hard-line regime. Khatami is a "G" allowed Khatami to take a step of curbing popular dissent, even investment.

Intellectually exposing the sick in hospitals, as President to the late Princess of Wales. But Khatami's "revolution" momentum and his efforts to mend more accountable have of the mullahs who consider the law.

He has outraged conservatives, clamping down on the honey, the groups, bankrolling the media, engaged them by insisting that they be tried in public. To his dismay, this resulted in seven deaths. Khatami has won even beyond Ghomayh's Karbaschi, who was arrested last month on corruption on the orders of the late Muhammad Yazdi, star of the Islamic Revolution. Khatami is forcing a change in the Islamic Republic. The power struggle being unleashed. Already Islamic, Khatami is about to try to reassert himself.

Jordanian-Israeli to expand av

(Continued from page 1)

million, and total investment in the new 2,500 dunum zone is estimated at \$200 million. Mr. Dekel and Mr. Haddadin expect the first phase to create 15,000 jobs.

Jordan Gateway is a \$9.50 point venture, with Dutch businessmen who have Israeli business interests, registered in Jordan and has obligated itself to developing the infrastructure of the zone and market the QIZ worldwide.

Mr. Dekel said that Jordan Gateway has received 50-60 letters of intent from multinational companies interested in establishing industrial activities in the zone.

"They represent a variety

(Continued from page 1)

The statement was issued as President Arafat was holding talks with UAE leaders as part of a diplomatic push to gain support for an Arab summit on the deadlocked peace talks.

"European, American and Arab efforts to revive the process have led nowhere because of the Israeli government's policy, which does not respect international resolutions and accords signed with the Palestinians."

The statement also lambasted Israel for its continued settlement policies, particularly in Arab east Jerusalem, saying they would "lead to an explosion."

Israel's decision in March last year to start work on a large new Jewish settlement on the hilltop of Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Jewish state occupied and illegally annexed in 1967, led to the current impasse in peace

Iran dares to defy grip of mullahs

By Colin Barracrough

IRANIAN LEADERS have rarely paid heed to public opinion. But Muhammad Khatami, the president, appears to have taken a leaf out of Bill Clinton's book.

The beleaguered reformer has begun holding "town meetings" similar to those staged by the American president to solicit the views of his subjects.

It is an unusual sight in Tehran, a city associated more with terror than open exchange of ideas. But in an emphatic departure from his predecessors' harsh style, Khatami, sitting in a box normally reserved for Friday prayers, engaged in earnest debate with Tehran University students yesterday after they staged a demonstration of support.

The president, a former culture minister fired from the government in 1993 for airing his liberal views, is popular among Iran's youth, who pine for more freedom. Vowing to soften the Islamic regime, he won 70 per cent of the vote in an election a year ago.

Since then, progressives in Tehran have been torn between wild optimism and dark despair as they wonder how long the smiling president will survive.

Real power, goes the argument, is wielded from behind the scenes by the hardline mullahs, who still regard America as the "Great Satan" and have allowed Khatami to take a figurehead role in the hope of curbing popular dissent and luring in foreign investment.

Intellectuals espousing this view refer jokingly to Khatami, who spends much of his time visiting the sick in hospitals, as President Diana - a reference to the late Princess of Wales.

But Khatami's "revolution" is gaining its own momentum and his efforts to make the government more accountable have tested the tolerance of the mullahs who consider themselves above the law.

He has outraged conservatives by threatening to clamp down on the bonyads, the shadowy Islamic groups bankrolling the mullahs. He has further enraged them by insisting that some alleged dissidents be tried in public. To the mullahs' embarrassment, this resulted in several acquittals.

Khatami has won even bigger battles. When Gholamhossein Karbaschi, Tehran's liberal mayor, was arrested last month and accused of corruption on the orders of the hardline chief justice, Muhammad Yazdi, students took to the streets, forcing a climbdown. Although the mayor was let out on bail, he could still face trial.

The power struggle brings risks of bloody upheaval. Already Islamic vigilantes are strutting about to try to reassert observance of unpopular

codes. They have beaten up female cyclists — riding bicycles is considered sinful by the purists — and attacked cultural centres where Khatami enthusiasts gather daily. Liberal figures' effigies have been hanged. But a new boldness is pushing Iranians to ever more vocal protest. "People are standing up and demanding their rights," said a young mother.

Khatami responds with concessions. Last week, the government approved the formation of a moderate political party, the first allowed in Iran since Ayatollah Khomeini banned them in 1985. This could have far-reaching consequences. "Once the authorities recognise a plurality among themselves, they have to admit other views into that political pluralism," said Farideh Farhi, a political analyst in Tehran.

In another demonstration of the way things have changed, students are protesting with relative impunity. People are flaunting the dictates of so-called guardians of the revolution by wearing Western designer clothes and swaying by night to the latest disco music. Irreverent new publications are poking fun at the hierarchy. The bravest, Jameyeh, has clocked up a circulation of 130,000 in three months with an unusual mix of Western-style objectivity, sports and humour.

However, Khatami faces a formidable foe in Ali Khamenei, an arch-conservative and Iran's spiritual leader. He controls the military, the police and intelligence agencies. Conservatives also control the judiciary, the key councils of state and, through a close alliance with traditional bazaar merchants, a good deal of the Iranian economy.

This leaves Khatami with little room for manoeuvre. In the hope of swift results, he has tried to make friends abroad. He has mended relations with regional rivals such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia and encouraged contact with Europe and America. Such overtures are partly to do with economics: world oil prices are at their lowest since 1973, and the country desperately needs foreign investors to stay afloat. Iran would also like to see the return of \$11 billion in assets frozen by the U.S. in 1979.

Iran and America have exchanged wrestling teams and hopes linger in Washington that an end to the years of mutual hostility may be in sight.

"Demonisation has gone on for too long on both sides," said Jerry Leach, a member of an American foreign policy association visiting Iran next week to try to open a dialogue with the government. "We believe dialogue, good listening and trying to understand each other can help."

— The Sunday Times

... Khatami's "revolution" is gaining its own momentum and his efforts to make the government more accountable have tested the tolerance of the mullahs who consider themselves above the law.

Vatican supports formal recognition of Jerusalem's unique, sacred character

Pope John Paul II received the credentials of Jordan's non-resident Ambassador to the Vatican Adnan B. Talhouni at a ceremony in Rome last Thursday. The pontiff presented Mr. Talhouni with a letter in which he highlighted the Holy See's position on the Arab-Israeli peace process and the status of Jerusalem. Following is the text of the pope's letter.

I AM pleased to welcome you today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal appoints you Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Holy See. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between us, you are the third in a distinguished line of ambassadors who have worked effectively to strengthen the ties uniting us. I extend to you my good wishes for the success of your mission. I thank you for the greetings which you bring from King Hussein, and I ask you to convey to His Majesty my own greetings and to assure him of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

Inevitably, the peace and prosperity of Jordan are closely tied to the situation in the Middle East as a whole. In recent years, hopes have been raised that negotiations would produce peaceful solutions to the many problems of the region. But these hopes have not yet been fulfilled. Indeed in times such as the present the prospect of fulfilment even seems to have receded.

It is clear that there will be no peace unless there is the will to pursue the path of dialogue and understanding which alone can lead to peace. When this determination is not present on all sides, frustration and anger take hold, which in turn lead to violence. I pay tribute to your country and to His Majesty the King, for Jordan has demonstrated a strong will to pursue the way of dialogue and understanding, to work patiently and courageously for peace. The most recent negotiations suggest that, with the prospect of a breakdown in the peace process which would surely prove disastrous for all there is still determination to find non-violent solutions. It is my fervent hope that the voice of reason will prevail. I repeat once again that there is only one path that can be taken — that of respect, justice and cooperation. History has repeatedly shown that the rejection of dialogue in favour of aggression is a decision which creates many more prob-

lems than it solves; it is not a reasonable option. The only reasonable option, in the Middle East as elsewhere, remains that of dialogue and understandings.

In the current complex and difficult situation, the Church seeks to make her distinctive contribution, not in favour of one people or another but in favour of peace, and therefore in favour of all the peoples of the region. In this, the Church is motivated not by narrow institutional self-interest nor by political calculation, but by a profound respect for all the peoples of the Middle East and by the solemn duty which the Gospel imposes. It is the Gospel rather than ideology which enables the Church to see the truth about the human person and human society, a truth easily obscured when pressures are so great and complexities so daunting. In such a situation, the Church seeks to speak a word of truth about the human

The Holy City has always had a special place in Jordanian history and in the heart of the Jordanian people.

person and human society, since without that truth any agreement which might be negotiated would be illusory. It would lack the one sure foundation upon which a just and lasting peace may be built.

The Church is inspired by a moral vision, born of faith, it is true, but reaching beyond the circle of Christian faith to be shared by all people committed to the common good. It is a moral vision which Jews, Christians and Muslims can share, since all three are born of a tradition of ethical monotheism. We are all children of a religious tradition which insists that man cannot worship the one true God without respecting the moral imperative which has its roots in God. Such a vision understands that a peace process which ignores justice will descend sooner or later into short-sighted pragmatism, self-interest or opportunism.

In fact, there can be no peace without justice. All the peoples of the Middle East have in some way been wronged, and all have inalienable rights. Justice demands that wrongs be redressed and rights be respected. But neither will there be jus-

tice without truth. To see the necessary relationship between peace, justice and truth is to understand the moral structure of peace. It is this above which any peace process must respect; and it is at this point that the Church pledges to cooperate in every way possible.

The history of the Middle East shows how religion, when linked to ideology, can divide and lead even to violent conflict. Yet it is equally clear that, when religion is allowed to be what it truly is, then it can unite, enabling believers to walk together in trust and mutual respect. With its enlightened Constitution and the initiatives in favour of interreligious dialogue taken by His Majesty the King and by Crown Prince Hassan, the Kingdom of Jordan has indicated that such a way forward is possible. It is my hope that Christians in your country will continue to participate in all sectors of social life and in public institutions. But also beyond the borders of Jordan, it is vital now that Jews, Christians and Muslims should find that common path which leads to a strengthening of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation.

In reflecting upon peace, my thoughts turn inevitably to the Holy City, so often destroyed yet always rebuilt, its stones a symbol of both human desolation and the power of human hope. The long and troubled history of Jerusalem will reach a new threshold in the year 2000 as the Third Millennium of Christianity dawns. It is my fervent hope that this may prompt formal recognition with international guarantees of the unique and sacred character of the Holy City. Indeed, it is we who belong to Jerusalem, since we are all her children; and if this is true, then the City ought to become a place where all peoples of the world can meet in peace. The Holy City has always had a special place in Jordanian history and in the heart of the Jordanian people.

Mr. Ambassador, I trust most sincerely that the bonds of friendship and understanding between the Kingdom of Jordan and the Holy See will be strengthened by your time of service in Rome, so that we may collaborate ever more effectively in the search for peace. I assure you of the ready assistance of the various offices and agencies of the Holy See as you perform your duties. Upon yourself, your family and your beloved country I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

Jordanian-Israeli industrial complex to expand availability of QIZ districts

(Continued from page 1)

million, and total investment in the new 2,500 dunum zone is estimated at \$200 million. Mr. Dekel and Mr. Haddadin expect the first phase to create 15,000 jobs.

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Mr. Dekel said that Jordan Gateway has received 50-60 letters of intent from multinational companies interested in establishing industrial activities in the zone.

"They represent a variety

of interests — textiles, food manufacturing, electronics and appliance assembly," he said. "We intend to start negotiations for these projects immediately."

The QIZ was a U.S. initiative to boost the so far elusive "fruits of peace" to Jordan, and has fallen under heavy criticism from many Jordanians who claim it is a tool to force economic cooperation with Israel.

The zone, they say, will allow Israel to exploit Jordan's cheap labour, water and infrastructure without forcing Israeli investors to make any long term economic commitments in the Kingdom. The new zone generated similar criticisms from reporters at

yesterday's press conference that the designation of land in Israel would prevent investors from putting their money into Jordan.

Mr. Dekel countered the criticism, saying that Israel is losing its competitive advantage in labour intensive industries and is faced with the choice of moving several industrial operations to the Far East or with creating an opportunity for regional economic development that would encourage those companies to stay in the region.

"There is no contradiction in what we are doing," he said. "This will create jobs on both sides and both sides will be able to take advantage of it."

Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinians: One partner too many

(Continued from page 1)

cement and other products — through companies — from Israeli firms although it had the choice of Jordanian and Egyptian alternatives, sometimes even at better terms," he added.

"In some cases vested interests played a role in determining who gets the deal, which of course hurts the image of the leadership and the investment climate."

Palestinians, after consultations with Jordan, are now negotiating with Israel through the Joint Economic Committee (JEC) established under the Paris agreement, to widen the list.

Under the signed agreements, Israel should have increased the number of items and the quantities on the lists as the PNA gained control over cities. Three months ago, after a

three-year delay, Israel began to look into the matter — but only into how to increase quantities.

But the PNA, which has great influence on private-sector monopolies that import basic items such as food commodities, steel and cement, has not tried to steer their business away from Israel in the direction of Jordan or other Arab countries.

Another reason discouraging businessmen from taking risks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is the PNA's handling of the economy amid allegations of rampant corruption.

"Corruption is a problem, but it is not the main problem," said professor of economics Hisham Awartani, a lecturer at Najah University in Nablus and a member of the negotiating team at the Paris talks. "The

main problem is the absence of a strong legal framework to prosecute violations and protect the investor," Dr. Awartani told the same symposium.

Other economists cite the issue of trade financing as an important element in Palestinians' preference to deal with Israeli counterparts rather than Jordanians.

"The convenience of Palestinian-Israeli trade has not been substituted by comparable Jordanian facilities," said a leading Jordanian economist. "The Israelis give the Palestinians easy payment terms, sometimes over a long period of time, whereas with Jordan, a letter of credit must be opened and in most cases payment must be immediate."

The presence of a dozen Jordanian bank branches in the PNA areas, many of which

have earned a reputation of being overly cautious, have so far not been able to play an effective role in facilitating Jordanian-Palestinian trade.

"Jordanian banks are controlled by remote control from Amman," said a Palestinian official. "It is a different world here and they are competing with the Israeli banking system, one of the best in the world."

Palestinian and Jordanian businessmen also cite weak Jordanian marketing techniques as another reason that has left Palestinian shelves empty of Jordanian products.

"To do business here, the Jordanian straight jacket has to come off," said another Palestinian official. "Our market is more demanding and our prices are higher."

Palestinians, used to consuming many Israeli

brands under 30 years of occupation, will find it difficult to switch to Jordanian or other products overnight.

Therefore, Jordan has to raise its profile in the West Bank through its trade offices in Ramallah and Gaza, hold more trade shows, and increase advertising on local television channels and in newspapers, said the Palestinian official.

Although official meetings between Jordanians and the Palestinians and Jordan and Israel have taken place over the past three years to deal specifically with the trade issue, no tangible result has yet been achieved.

Whichever way one looks at it, the fact remains that in the Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian economic triangle, two is company and three is a crowd.

UAE supports efforts to convene summit; Saudi crown prince travels to Syria today

(Continued from page 1)

The statement was issued as President Arafat was holding talks with UAE leaders as part of a diplomatic push to gain support for an Arab summit on the deadlocked peace talks. "European, American and Arab efforts to revive the process have led nowhere because of the Israeli government's policy, which does not respect international resolutions and accords signed with the Palestinians."

The statement also lambasted Israel for its continued settlement policies, particularly in Arab east Jerusalem, saying they would "lead to an explosion."

Israel's decision in March last year to start work on a large new Jewish settlement on the hilltop of Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Jewish state occupied and illegally annexed in 1967, led to the current impasse in peace

negotiations.

In a bid to break the deadlock, Washington is pushing Israel to hand over another 13 per cent of the West Bank to Palestinian rule, in tandem with Palestinian measures against terrorism, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said a troop withdrawal of that size would threaten Israel's security.

"The Israeli government has shown its true face by refusing the proposals of the United States, which is much closer to [Israel's] stance than ours," the Palestinian cabinet said.

Mr. Netanyahu returned to Israel on Friday after his visit to China, and is due to hold a cabinet meeting on Monday to reexamine the U.S. proposals.

President Arafat told a ceremony at the Cairo-based Arab League Tuesday: "Palestine risks becoming the theatre for an explosion of violence... A summit has become a national necessity to protect the rights

and the interests of our Arab nation," he said.

Palestinian leaders believe the coming week will be decisive for the success of the eight-month-old U.S. drive to unlock the peace process, saying Washington knows it cannot ask for more time without serious resistance from the Arab side.

"The United States knows perfectly well that the Palestinians and Arabs will not agree to continue any longer with the current situation of uncertainty," Mr. Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeina, told Agence France Presse.

The Palestinians hope the U.S. initiative will end with Israel accepting U.S. proposals for a partial pullback from the West Bank or, if Israel continues to resist, that Washington will make its proposals public and explain why they have not worked.

JTC, FLAG sign \$28m deal

(Continued from page 1)

would cost an average of \$300,000 for an unlimited period of time.

As such, subscribers will enjoy decreased telecommunications charges, said Mr. Dweik.

The agreement also allows JTC to resell communications traffic to telecommunications carriers in neighbouring countries, said Mamoun Balqar, JTC's director general.

"The project... is a strategic option for Jordan in the present and future phase of increasing volume of international telecommunications traffic in the region," he added.

Indicating that the time had come for JTC to stop relying solely on satellite

channels and regional fibreoptic cables with neighbouring countries for international telecommunications, Mr. Balqar said "international telecommunications traffic through fibre is superior to satellite, especially when it comes to data-communications transfers."

FLAG is owned by Bell Atlantic (U.S.), Dallah Al Barakeh Group (Saudi Arabia), Telecom Holding Co. (U.S.), Marubeni Corporation (Japan), the Asian Infrastructure Fund (Hong Kong) and Gulf Associates Incorporated (U.S.).

FLAG has landings in Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Korea

and Japan.

Another fibreoptic cable under construction and planned to pass through the Middle East is the SeaWeMe 3 cable (South-east Asia, Middle East, Western Europe). SeaWeMe 3 will be longer than FLAG, 38,000 kilometres, and will have more capacity. The cable, which will run from Frankfurt to Shanghai will have 10 gigabits per second of capacity and is expected to be operational later this year. Among SeaWeMe 3's sponsors is Deutsche Telekom, the giant telecommunications provider. Observers say that by the year 2002, the earth will be covered by over 632,000 kilometres of undersea water fibreoptic cable.

Pakistan sets off sixth nuclear blast, surpassing India's five

(Continued from page 1)

With both India and Pakistan declaring themselves nuclear weapons states, Mr. Ahmad said it is time for the rest of the world, and in particular the five nuclear states, to accept the new reality.

Both state-run Pakistan Radio and Pakistan Television announced that two devices had been exploded Sunday, but Mr. Ahmad later said that it was just one.

There also was confusion about the number of devices exploded on Thursday, with initial reports saying two devices had been exploded and later

reports saying three. Mr. Sharif later said five devices had been exploded.

In an interview published Saturday in Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper The News, the architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme boasted that his country's nuclear weapons programme was more sophisticated than India's.

"I would say that they have used the old technology of plutonium from spent fuel, whereas we have used enriched uranium, which is much more sophisticated and a safer process," Abdul Qadeer Khan was quoted as saying.

Jordan trying to defuse dispute with Lebanon over watermelons

By Mohammad Ben Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan and Lebanon are engaged in tough negotiations to defuse a 12-day-old dispute over 100 Jordanian trucks, carrying watermelons, stranded at the Lebanese border on grounds their cargo exceeded an annual bilateral quota, an official said Saturday.

Agriculture Minister Mujemh Khreisha told the Jordan Times he had contacted his Lebanese counterpart Chawqi Fakhouy to help in letting in 2,700 tonnes of Jordanian watermelons.

"I received a promising sign from Mr. Fakhouy who said that he will personally look after the problem," he said.

Under the agreement, up to 4,000 tonnes of watermelons from Jordan can receive duty-free access to the Lebanese market from May 1 to June 10.

Mr. Fakhouy was earlier quoted by Agence France Presse as saying that Beirut already imported 4,700 tonnes of watermelons from Jordan.

"The Lebanese council of ministers was scheduled to discuss the matter in its session on Wednesday, but more important issues were discussed," Salem Lawzi, director of state-run Agriculture Marketing Organisation, told the Jordan Times.

"We did not volunteer to send the watermelon," he said. "It was sent on requests made by Lebanese businessmen... and they [the Lebanese businessmen] are supporting us in our stand," he said.

"It's not the first time such an incident occurs. Our Lebanese brothers broke many agreements before and we did too, but always a breakthrough is found. I wonder why the Lebanese government is taking such a stance," said Dr. Lawzi.

In 1997, the two countries faced a similar problem after the Lebanese barred trucks carrying vegetables from entering the country because the Lebanese market was saturated. Jordan reacted by halting a shipment of Lebanese vegetables at the border. The problem was resolved after several days.

Jordan exports vegetables to Lebanon during the winter as well as melon in the summer in exchange for Lebanese oranges, apples and cherries as stipulated by an agricultural calendar between the two countries.

Jordanian officials said they would take measures against imports of Lebanese farm produce if Lebanon does not allow the shipment in.

Market prices of basic foodstuffs are lower than level set by ministry

AMMAN (J.T.) — Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki Saturday assured the public that the ministry keeps strategic quantities of wheat, barley, sugar, milk and rice to enable the ministry to adjust its prices if they rise unjustifiably.

"The ministry will not compete with the private sector," Dr. Mulki said noting that the intention is only to prevent prices from rising especially when international prices for basic foodstuffs are at low levels not reached for more than 10 years.

He added that the Kingdom's supply situation is good and that there is no shortages of sugar, rice, milk, wheat and barley in the market.

The minister stressed that the prices of basic foodstuffs are even sold at prices less than those of the ministry.

"Each tonne of barley is sold at 30 per cent less than the price set by the ministry. Each tonne of sugar sells at 10 per cent less but the ministry and the private sector sell milk at the same price," said the minister.

Dr. Mulki said the strategic quantities of wheat suffice the Kingdom for three months, sugar for two months and barley for three months.

Syria pushes for modernising industry and overhauling export regulations

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria must modernise its industry and overhaul its export regulations if it is to profit from a coming association accord with the European Union (EU) giving Syrian products more access to the EU market, Syria's media says.

Almost daily, Syria's state-controlled press has been running calls for "profound changes" in business, saying exporters must upgrade their products and services if they are to compete successfully for European customers.

Official negotiations on the accord, which would gradually lift EU customs barriers on Syrian goods to create a free-trade zone, began in Brussels at a meeting May 14 and 15.

A second meeting is scheduled for next October, according to a European diplomat.

The daily Tishrin wrote recently that Syria's economic development depends on "our capacity to export, that is to maintain (our industry) at the level of our foreign competition."

Tishrin and other official papers have published worried analyses and reports on the state of the Syrian economy, questioning the ability of some enterprises to survive "going out into an open market" after decades of central planning.

In an effort to calm fears, Syria's minister for industry, Barakat Shahin, told the daily that "the economic problems in Syria are well-known and in the process of being solved."

But he also called for caution in face of changes saying: "No-one in Syria can accept the social and economic consequences of (failure), which would fall upon the poorest classes"

of society.

Mr. Shahin said he expected Syria's cumbersome state-owned companies to have more trouble meeting the export challenge than the private or mixed sector, "which is better able to adapt."

The private sector accounts for 80 per cent of Syria's industrial output, according to Bashar Hatahet of the chamber of commerce here.

European officials have said that Syria has several industries which could do well in more open trade with Europe.

There are several "promising industries, such as textiles, as well as many potential (industries) in Syria which have not been developed," said Xavier Marshall, an advisor to the EU delegation in Damascus.

Mr. Marshall said that a Syrian-European business centre would help the ministry of industry carry out an in-depth industrial survey.

Textiles, which accounted for 40 per cent of total exports in 1997 and contributed 15 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), is considered Syria's most important industry, followed by foodstuffs and chemicals.

Currently, 80 per cent of fabrics made here are exported to Europe and the United States, with sales reaching \$1.5 billion in 1997, Mr. Hatahet said.

In one encouraging sign for the textiles sector, which employs 180,000 workers, Syria won the contract to provide six million official T-shirts for the World Cup next month in France.

But some Syrian businessmen fear they will be unable to compete in Europe if Syria does not

also radically change its own banking and finance laws, which they say make exporting a headache.

"We want appropriate laws and regulations and less administrative interference," one businessman said.

He cited as example export laws still on the books which were conceived in 1953, when the dollar traded at 3.95 Syrian pounds, whereas today it trades at 52 pounds.

"Throughout the world, governments support exporters, but in Syria we pay taxes and duties on exports," the businessman said.

He added that many businessmen in Syria are eagerly awaiting the year 2000 — when Syria's membership in the World Trade Organisation begins — in hopes that "then lots of things will change."

Outside experts have said that the biggest competitive disadvantages facing all Syrian industries is the country's excessive bureaucracy, opaque laws, and the time-consuming process of obtaining authorisation to import primary materials needed for manufacturing.

In a four-year study completed last year, and published by the weekly Baath Economist, Japanese analyst Toshio Sato said the public sector is burdened by aging equipment and lack of flexibility.

Mr. Sato also found that all Syrian businesses face one more common obstacle: A demoralised workforce because of low wages and the absence of benefits.

According to the Central Statistics Bureau, 68 per cent of salaries are less than \$100 a month in Syria's industrial sector.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Money's a little tight, but that shouldn't be much of a problem. You don't need any money for love. You can gaze into each other's eyes just as well over peanut butter sandwiches. If the person you're with doesn't agree, then you're obviously with the wrong person.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Try to be considerate about an older person's idiosyncrasies this morning. He or she doesn't always make sense, but that's OK. Everybody loves the stories anyway. You want to be a little more firmly grounded in reality. That's your job.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) It's an excellent day for fixing things up around the house. You'll have more energy, and you'll be more creative. Part of the trouble has been that you know you wanted changes, but couldn't pinpoint exactly what or how. Those decisions will be easier to make now.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) It's better to listen than to do much talking. The others will be doing plenty of that. All you have to do is ask the right questions and you'll find out more than you ever wanted to know. Toss in a little flattery and you'll really get an earful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Games and conversations should be fascinating on a variety of subjects. Don't spend the whole day talking, however. You need more activity than that. Drag your friends off on some sort of adventure. How about a long walk to a picnic site?

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) If you've been tidying up the place, you're probably about halfway through by now. If you haven't used an item in more than three years, either let it go or pack it away. The more of this you get done, the better you'll feel, and the more room you'll have for other things.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You may still be on your weekend adventure. If so, continue until the last shred of daylight. Are you riding motorcycles, sailing or climbing mountains? If not, you should be. Get home soon after dark, however. You've got things to do before work on Monday.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Only buy household items or appliances if you're replacing something that's broken. Don't get an item you've never had before — not at this time. It looks like you've been having mechanical difficulty lately, so this shouldn't crimp your style much.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're going to have to get serious about your career tomorrow, and it wouldn't hurt to prepare ahead of time. Get in some physical activity, too. You can think about your next strategic move while you're jogging or swimming. The jostling will clear your brain.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If the stores don't have that perfect item in stock yet, maybe you can be the one who invents it. Get your ideas down on paper, and you could go from rags to riches. That's a Capricorn specialty, you know.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The moon is going into Virgo. Before that happens, make up your mind. Figure out what you want, and tell a friend. It helps if you get the idea out of your head. Later, you can figure out how you're going to do it. You'll be more practical then, and so will your mate.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Go at a building project full speed ahead. You can get an amazing amount done in a short time. If you have the right crew, you could put up a good-sized barn this weekend. Get as much done as you can, and have a great time while you're at it.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

English Editor Wanted

Textual editor needed immediately for an English language weekly. Native English speaker with previous editing skills preferred.

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CLAUDE ATTALA has recently joined the Forum Hotels in Jordan, Amman and Petra as the new Regional Director of Sales & Marketing. Attala of Italian/Lebanese background and born in Zambania has spent the last four and a half years in the Middle East covering Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and until recently the United Arab Emirates where his last posting was as Director of Sales & Marketing for the Forte Grand — Abu Dhabi. He will concentrate his efforts enhancing the Forum Hotels branding both within Jordan and internationally as well as



restructuring the sales & marketing departments for both hotels.

Malaysia warned of recession if bank lending drops

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian government economic advisor Daim Zainuddin has warned that a rapid slowdown in bank lending could plunge the economy into recession and some troubled companies should close.

The warning by Mr. Daim — a former finance minister who steered Malaysia through its last recession in the mid-1980s — came only a day after Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim reportedly

said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) was "not too encouraging" in the three months to March.

Mr. Anwar nevertheless said the government would maintain its 2.5 per cent GDP forecast for the year, and that he was confident Malaysia would not fall into recession given improved conditions in South Korea and Thailand, the positive turn of events in Indonesia and Japan's latest stimulus

package.

The remarks by Mr. Daim appeared to support Mr. Anwar's description of the slowdown in the March quarter while placing greater emphasis on the possibility of recession.

Mr. Daim said new lending had "fallen sharply" with banks being too cautious in extending funds, including loans to productive sectors of the Malaysian economy. This could "eventually lead to a recession," he said.

"While curbs on credit are essential to control lending growth, strict implementation and lack of sensitivity to the current situation could result in adverse effects that were unexpected," the advisor added.

The former finance minister also said that higher interest rates would benefit no party as many firms might fail.

"Survival of the private sector is the best approach," he stressed.

THE Daily Crossword by Jay Sullivan

ACROSS

- 1 Father of the 12 patriarchs
- 6 Cornet duel
- 10 Pinocchio, for one
- 14 Winged
- 15 Annapolis Univ.
- 16 Paris airport
- 17 — Buenos (verb)
- 18 Prescribed assistance?
- 20 Gamer
- 22 British money
- 23 Wine bottles
- 27 More impertinent
- 29 Lacking principle
- 30 Card game
- 31 Number system base
- 32 Cough up cash?
- 37 Musical Redding
- 38 Tapestry
- 39 Author Vidal
- 40 Gold digger's apparel?
- 42 Works at
- 43 Verdi
- 44 Intense
- 45 French pirate
- 49 Invitation response?
- 50 Hot spots
- 51 Bros.
- 52 Shared golf accessory?
- 55 Bewildered
- 60 Indic language
- 61 "I smell" —
- 62 Long
- 63 Musical
- 64 Light pals
- 65 Supernumerary

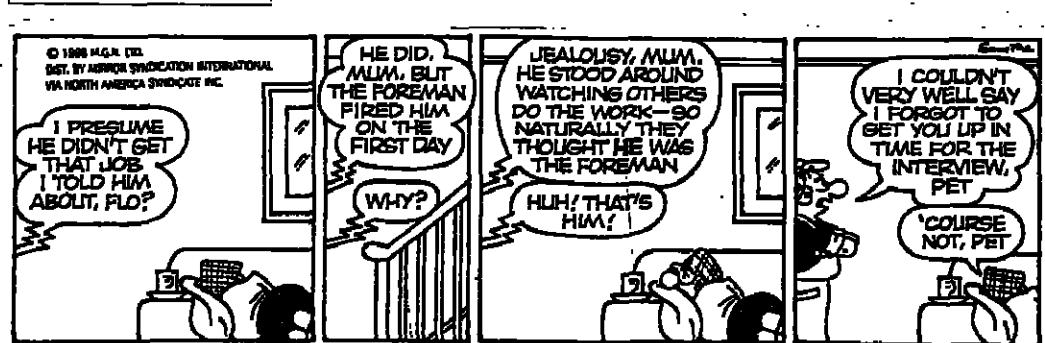
DOWN

- 1 Blue bird
- 2 Stout
- 3 Squad or stock
- 4 Gambolling letters
- 5 Grizzly communique?
- 6 Big brass
- 7 P.O.
- 8 Caravansary
- 9 PC network
- 10 Veins
- 11 Afghan neighbor
- 12 Rocker Cooper
- 13 Golf cup
- 19 Derby site
- 21 Moray or lamprey
- 23 Billards shot
- 24 Fine violin
- 25 "The Kiss" sculptor
- 26 Come about
- 27 Egyptian president
- 28 War god
- 30 Non-least day
- 32 Unpolished
- 33 Distant admirer?
- 34 Bete —
- 35 Put up
- 36 Sycophant's words
- 38 — were (in a manner of speaking)
- 41 "Midnight Cowboy" character
- 42 Porcine vote?
- 44 Winter mo.
- 45 Yoga position
- 46 Ward off
- 47 — cold; starve a fever
- 48 As a joke
- 49 Run rampant
- 51 Q-Tip, e.g.
- 53 Excellent!
- 54 — la le
- 56 Waco's state: abbr.
- 57 Posed
- 58 Good up
- 59 Collected sayings

Peanuts



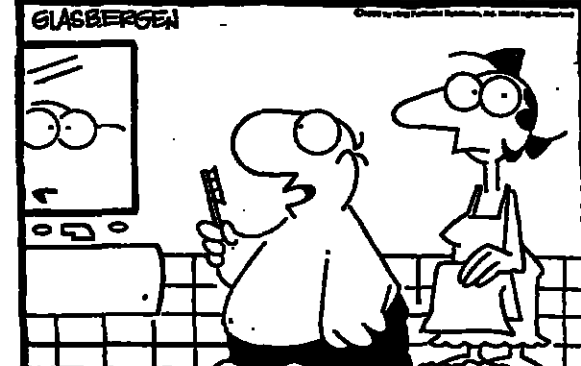
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I'm always flattered when I see some teenager who shaved his head to look like me."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DADIE

SYRTT

CLUDGE

IMFLYS

Answer here: HE WAS

Yesterday's Jumble: UNITY
Answer: What the caring baker liked to do — HELP THE "TODAY"

DA

A re

Union Ch

Comp

BY CAPITALISM retained earnings, the Vegetable Oil Industry raised its capital from 104.95 in accordance of the general assembly of the general assembly.

Board Chairman R. ordinary session of the that the company's sales from around 103,000.55 and, consequently, profit of 103,000.55 compared to 102,400.55 in 1997.

Mr. Salim indicated all plan was able to cover 104.40 million, to Iraq work of the Jordanians.

Irbid distrib

THE IRRID D

Company is distributing dividends to shareholders approval of the general assembly a 10 per cent bonus.

According to the gross earnings, the company compared to 102,400.55 in 1997. Total expenditure reached 102,400.55 million. Totalled fixed assets 102,400.55 million, from 103,000.55 million at the current assets rise by 103,000.55 million assets amounted to 103,000.55 million.

REUTEL

The Bus

Major Currencies

Currency	USD
US Dollar	1.0000
DE Mark	0.9366
GB Sterling	1.6381
CH Franc	0.9366
JP Yen	0.0093
CA Dollar	0.6987
IT Lira	0.0006
NL Guilder	0.0036
FR Franc	0.0065

Energy

Currency	USD
US Dollar	1.0000
Jordan Dinar	1.4794
Saudi Riyal	0.3669
Bahrain Dinar	2.46
Qatar Dinar	0.2707
Kuwait Dinar	2.2600
Emirate Dinar	0.2723
Lebanese L1000	0.35
Egyptian	0.2500

Oil

Oil	Last	Change
Brent	14.08	14.70
W. Texas	15.17	14.30
Bonny	14.86	14.30
Dubai	12.46	12.46
Uti. Gas	146.98	146.98

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy
US Dollar	0.679
GB Sterling	1.081
DE Mark	0.3669
CH Franc	0.9366
FR Franc	0.0065
JP Yen	0.0093
NL Guilder	0.0036
IT Lira	0.0006

For me?



WHY THE CHILD PRODIGY ENJOYED HIS BIRTHDAY.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumble: UNITY
Answer: What the caring baker liked to do — HELP THE "TODAY"

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Cameroon try to recapture old sparkle

PARIS (AFP) — Cameroon touched down in America for the 1994 World Cup finals high on expectation after an unforgettable campaign in Italy four years earlier.

But it was soon clear the indomitable carefree spirit that had taken the 1990 finals by storm with the heroics of Roger Milla and his men was gone, in its place was unseemly squabbling over unpaid salaries.

From African mould breakers to an embarrassment, Cameroon had lost their way — a far cry from that famous victory over Argentina in the opening game of Italia 90.

The Lions, in sharp contrast to first-round rivals Bulgaria, are a young squad, with the charismatic Milla, Emmanuel Kunde and Cyrille Makanaky all relieved of their duties on the front line.

Their future rests on the shoulders of players like Salomon Olembe, who became the youngest player to grace Wembley when he appeared in the side that lost 2-0 to England in November just weeks before his 17th birthday.

The precocious Olembe, like a number of his teammates, plays in the French league for Nantes and he made

a bright start to his fledgling international career when scoring on his debut against Cuba.

New coach Claude Le Roy, a former sports director at Paris St Germain, will also be pinning his hopes on the continuing sparkling form of his French-born striker Joseph-Desire Job, who turned down an invitation to play for France's Under-21 team. The 20-year-old has caused a real stir at Lyon, illuminating the side with his goalscoring prowess.

But Cameroon's biggest star this summer could be Patrick Mboma, who emerged as top scorer in the African qualifiers with five goals. Formerly with Metz and PSG, he moved to Gamba Osaka and last year was top scorer in the Japanese league with 25 goals in 28 matches.

Cameroon emerged unbeaten in their qualifying group, finishing with a four-point cushion over Angola. The stage is set, now all they have to do is rekindle that old sparkle.

Croatia grace World Cup stage for 1st time

PARIS (AFP) — World Cup new boys Croatia are many peoples' idea of a side that can really go places in France this summer.

Certainly Miroslav Blazevic, their 62-year-old coach, believes so: After all, he's seen it in the stars.

A keen astrologer, he predicted after his side had scraped through a tougher than expected qualifying campaign: "I'm convinced that we are ready for something big, and it will happen in France."

"I admire France and the French in many respects, and when I was coach of Nantes I helped in the development of some of their players. They will get to the final and so will we."

The hard-hitting smooth-talking chain-smoker almost resigned after Croatia's 2-1 defeat to Germany in Euro 96. His head was once again on the block after the side threw away a 3-1 lead to draw 3-3 against Slovenia in their fourth qualifying match, leading to a furious protest from fans.

But wins against Greece and Bosnia restored his tarnished reputation and after rising to the challenge of beating Ukraine in the play-offs Croatia were in.

Blazevic has the job of fusing together experienced players like Real Madrid striker Davor Suker with fresh blood, although the loss of the experienced Alen Boksic comes as a blow.

The Croatia Zagreb duo Goran Juic and Dario Simic have

fitted in well during the qualifying stages, giving the team strength in defence.

Up front Croatia are well served by the fast, aggressive

Suker.

Selected by one Croatian newspaper as the best player in the squad last year, Slaven Bilic of Everton holds a unique place as the only team member with a university degree. He was appointed captain after only two months.

Colombia set to erase painful memories

PARIS (AFP) — The venue may be different and it may be four years on, but Colombia's squad remains remarkably unchanged from the last World Cup finals.

Skipper Carlos Valderrama is impossible to avoid on the pitch, not only for his flame red hair but also his passing and intuitive reading of the game.

A real anchorman in mid-field, the effervescent 37-year-old prowls around his territory, making the impossible seem easy and providing essential support to the predatory Faustino Asprilla.

Parma's outstanding ball controller, top scorer for his national side in their quali-

fying round with seven goals, is one of the few Colombians to have made it in Europe.

Prone to indiscipline on and off the field Asprilla played in the finals four years ago when Colombia started as one of the favourites but failed to live up to that billing.

With the tragedy of defender Andres Escobar's death on his return home after an own goal in America hanging over the side, morale plummeted. But the climate is clearer for France 98 and soccer's links with the Colombian drug cartels — Wilson Perez was sentenced to 50

months prison for possession — relaxed after concerted government action.

After initially running away with the South American qualifying group they hit a stumbling block, suffering four consecutive defeats. But back on track with victories in the final three matches, they qualified in third place.

Other players who will make their presence felt are the American-based Anthony de Avila, who played in the last World Cup, and Freddy Rincon, a veteran of two finals and a perfect partner for Valderrama in the centre.



With manager Hernan Dario Gomez adopting a more practical style of play than his predecessor,

Colombia constitute a more solid side lying in wait for England, Romania and Tunisia in the first round.

Morocco beat France

CASABLANCA (AFP) — Morocco beat France 6-5 on penalties in the Hassan II tournament here on Friday night after the match was tied 2-2 after 90 minutes play. Salaheddine Bassir twice put Morocco ahead but Laurent Blanc and then Youri Djorkaeff both equalised. Then in the shootout France's Vincent Candela had his shot saved to settle the outcome after earlier misses by Morocco's Lahcen Abrami and Youri Djorkaeff of France.

French coach Aime Jacquet was surely not pleased by their performance, particularly the way they conceded the first goal.

However France won the tournament, which has a very strange system, by scoring more goals than England.

Laurent Blanc, normally so sure in defence, was beaten to an easy header and the ball fell to Bassir who easily lobbed keeper Bernard Lama in the ninth minute.

France, who were having trouble with the speed and work rate of their opponents were immediately up against it. However Blanc made up for his error in the 22nd minute when, from a Zinedine Zidane corner, Marseille's central defender rose to powerfully head home an equaliser.

It was Blanc's 13th international goal. Bassir put Morocco ahead once more in the 63rd minute but Youri Djorkaeff levelled nine minutes later. Lama almost put the ball into his own net in the closing minutes but his miscued kick ended up trickling just past the post.

SCOREBOARD

National League		
Chicago Cubs	1	Atlanta
Ny Mets	11	Philadelphia
Montreal	4	Pittsburgh
Milwaukee	4	Florida
Houston	7	Colorado
St Louis	8	San Diego
Cincinnati	8	Los Angeles
Arizona	1	San Francisco
American League		
Baltimore	6	Texas
Detroit	8	Chi White Sox
Seattle	6	Tampa Bay
Cleveland	7	Toronto
NY Yankees	6	Boston
Kansas City	5	Oakland
Anaheim	3	Minnesota

National Basketball Association semi-finals (series best-of-seven)
Indiana 92 Chicago 89
(Series tied 3-3)



British Michael Owen (L) jumps into the air while being attacked by Belgian Eric van Meir (R) during their match at the King Hassan II tournament in Casablanca May 29. Belgium won the penalty shoot out 4-3 (Reuters photo)

Belgium beat England on penalties

CASABLANCA (AFP) — Belgium beat England 4-3 on penalties after a goalless result at half-time in the Hassan II tournament here on Friday.

Rob Lee missed England's first penalty and Les Ferdinand saw his attempt pushed on to a post by keeper Philippe Van de Walle to settle the outcome. It was a poor match between a lethargic England and a Belgian side vastly changed from their 1-0 defeat to France in this event on Wednesday.

Paul Merson, who has needed to prove his form for England coach Glenn Hoddle, may not have done

enough to have earned selection for the World Cup. Hoddle will have been pleased with the work-rate of Lee, the assured keeping of Nigel Martyn, and yet more proof of how Michael Owen's sheer speed will be a major weapon next month. Who joins him is the question.

As well as Merson, Hoddle gave Nicky Butt and Lee their chance in the last game before France, and with Alan Shearer on the bench, and David Seaman and Tony Adams rested, handed the captaincy to Sol Campbell.

At 23 years and eight months, Campbell became

the youngest man to lead England since Bobby Moore, 22 years and a month old when he wore the armband for the first time exactly 35 years ago against Czechoslovakia in Bratislava. Campbell was one of perhaps only three men who can expect to start against Tunisia in their World Cup opener — the others being Gascoigne and Graeme Le Saux.

Martyn made a sensational flying save from a shot by Enzo Scifo, back in the Belgian side, after 87 minutes, in the best chance of a four match. Then came the shootout which decided the outcome.

World Cup countdown with Franz Beckenbauer

Are you a World Cup expert? Then let me challenge you

15) South Korea, along with Japan, will be one of the two countries to take over the baton from France after the 1998 World Cup and is one of the venues for the competition in 2002. This is a reward for being football's principal power in the Far East. Not for nothing, because since Mexico 1986 they have never failed to qualify for a World Cup.

In Mexico they were able to count on a forward who, with good reason, could be considered their football's best ambassador. As a player, he reaped many victories with numerous clubs in Germany: Drastadt 98, Eintracht Frankfurt and Leverkusen. In France in 1998 he will be there as his country's national coach. What is his name?

Facts and figures about the participating countries

NIGERIA

573,768 sq km Capital: Abuja
Population: 97,231,521 — 105.2 per sq km
Principal languages: English, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Fulani
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 260.

Participation in World Cup championships:

1930-34-38-42-46-50-54-58-62-66-70-74-78-82-86-90-94-98

NORWAY

323,877 sq km Capital: Oslo
Population: 4,169,937 12.5 per sq km (1996)
Principal language: Norwegian
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 37,250.

Participation in World Cup championships:

1930-34-38-42-46-50-54-58-62-66-70-74-78-82-86-90-94-98

Solve the country contest daily to find the phrase at the end of Beckenbauer's World Cup countdown

16) A count with a fearful reputation and sleep problems is said to originate from here. But that was long ago.

When political conditions went through a radical who plundered not only his own people but also the odd piece of royal silverware during state visits.

After his fall there was a lot of worry that hostilities could break out with a neighbouring state over an ethnic minority in the population. However, things have calmed down after a "basic treaty" was agreed between the two governments in 1996.

One of the capital's most influential people is a man with a big moustache who has grown rich through sport.

First he chased a small ball for much money. Then, when age began to set in, he made even more money by getting others to do the chasing. He is regarded as an absolute key figure in his sport.

Here is where a famous river flows into the sea after passing through several other countries taking part in the World Cup. During this century, military strategists of major powers have always been especially interested in this country because of its oil deposits and geographical position.

Solution: Please enter the letters of the country as instructed in the solution squares as follows:

First letter of the country in position 21.
Second letter in position 60.
Sixth letter in position 52.

17) Backgammon was invented here — all of 4,600 years ago. This is a country with a long and impressive history. It forms part of the background of a famed collection of tales so comendous that they take three years to get through — though only during the nights.

In more recent times another book caused a huge stir, prompting the intense

SOLUTION TO THE WORLD CUP COUNTRY CONTEST
The phrase we are looking for refers to a rather precise, though harsh definition of a country considered indispensable in the world of diplomats.

Please fill in the negative letters in the corresponding positions:

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00 00 00000 00 0000
00 000 0000 00
0000 0000 000000
00 000 0000

displeasure of the country's religious and political leaders.

They ordered the author's persecution — even though he lived elsewhere and was not a citizen. During the World Cup the national team will meet that of a country with which relations have been especially tense during the past 20 years.

Previously they had been excellent, but then major upheaval changed everything. An imperial ruler with a grandiose title was run out of the country.

He left a gigantic monument to himself in the capital. The World Cup draw suits the politicians, because both sides are now interested in improving relations, partly as a result of presidential elections last year.

Solution: Please enter the letters of the country as instructed in the solution squares as follows:

First letter of the country in position 2.

ANSWERS

CHALLENGE QUIZ

14) Germany and Brazil

COUNTRY CONTEST

14) Belgium

15) Nigeria

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1' Bruce Willis & Richard Gere ... in THE JACKAL Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA '2' Jim Carry ... in LIAR-LIAR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA The biggest cinema production TITANIC Shows: 12:00, 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	CONCORD THE RELIC Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI - KAMANANA Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN Antonio Banderas ... in TWO MUCH	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN DOWN PERISCOPE & still showing at 8:30 p.m. TITANIC	FISHAM YANES THEATRE TEL: 4625155 STARTING APRIL 6TH Don't Laugh Please We're Jordanian Starring Fisham Yanes, Amal Dabbas, Rania Kurdi and the group at 8:30 p.m. For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155

Volleyball federation recruits Cuban coach; prepares for Arab Championships

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Volleyball Federation (JVF) — absent from the regional an international scene for many years — is back in action and this time to stay.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, JVF Secretary Shawqi Abdallat said the federation had an ambitious plan for a comeback after a long absence.

"Since 1986, the JVF did not participate in any regional or international events. Now we have the will to start again," Mr. Abdallat said.

The JVF is preparing for the upcoming Arab Volleyball Championship which will group the best teams in the Arab World in Tunisia Sept. 6-13.

The women's volleyball team is also preparing for the First Arab Volleyball Championship to be held here in August. The team is currently training and

friendly matches are scheduled against Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

With a long-term plan for the teams, the JVF has signed a contract with a Cuban coach to lead the Jordanian teams.

"We have high hopes that the new Cuban coach Elberto Kraws entrusted with training both the men and women's teams," he said. "The Cubans are known for their volleyball skills."

"We have tried our luck with Chinese and Japanese coaches who were not that successful," he added.

The coach will be aided by two national coaches Majed Al Bakar and Ibrahim Philip.

The JVF also has an ambitious plan for another future event.

"We are looking forward for the next Pan Arab Games which will be held here in 1999," he said.

He said that Jordan did not take part in the Games in Lebanon last year because the teams were not ready for competition.

Pacers beat Bulls 92-89 to force seventh game

INDIANAPOLIS (AFP) — Travis Best outduelled Michael Jordan in the final minute Friday as Indiana beat Chicago 92-89 to force a seventh game in their National Basketball Association semi-final series.

Best, a reserve whose quickness has bothered Chicago throughout the series, snapped an 87-87 tie when he dribbled past Jordan and lofted a runner high off the glass with 33 seconds left.

Jordan, who scored 35 points, drew a foul with 19 seconds to go and tied it with two free throws. But Best again beat Jordan off the dribble and was fouled by the Chicago superstar with 8.5 seconds left. Best made both shots to give the Pacers

the lead for good.

Jordan, who missed a pair of shots in the final minute, tried to drive the lane but slipped and lost the ball. Derrick McKey was fouled with four-tenths of a second to go and made the first before intentionally missing the second, killing the clock.

Indiana's Dutch import Rik Smits scored 25 points and Dale Davis added 19 for Indiana, which reached Game Seven of the Eastern Conference finals for the third time in NBA franchise history.

The Pacers, who are trying to become the first ex-American Basketball Association club to

reach the NBA Finals since the 1976 merger of the leagues, lost to the New York Knicks in 1994 and the Orlando Magic in 1995.

Game Seven is Sunday night at Chicago. "We still haven't played well in Chicago," an optimistic Smits said. "I think we're due."

The Bulls, seeking their sixth title in eight years and their third in a row, have not been taken to a Game Seven since losing the 1994 conference semi-finals at New York.

Jordan was retired at the time and has not played a Game Seven since the Eastern Conference semi-finals in 1992, a win over New York.

FRENCH OPEN

Serena issues an ominous warning; Arazi, Berasategui, Pioline through



Serena Williams of the USA returns a shot to Dominique Van Roost of Belgium during their match in the French Open at Roland Garros stadium, May 30. Williams defeated Van Roost 6-1 6-1 (Reuters photo)

French Open diary

By The Associated Press

• Noah's dream turns into nightmare: Yannick Noah's dream of building a new national training center far from Paris is turning into a nightmare. The former French Open champion, who coaches both the Davis and Federation Cup teams, has lobbied hard to get the new, state-of-the-art facility off the ground. He'd originally planned to seek corporate money. He abandoned the idea — born during the 1997 French Open — after the French Tennis Federation decided to get involved. Noah told the sports daily L'Equipe the plan is currently on hold while the Federation tries to figure out the official role he will play once the center is built — which could be as far off as the year 2001. Noah blames politics for the delays.

• Belgian breakthrough: Four Belgian players have reached the third round of the French Open — the most ever — for the first time since the beginning of the Open era in 1968. The second-best performance came last year when three Belgians earned third-round berths.

• Paraguayan performances: Ramon Delgado is the first Paraguayan to make a splash at the French Open since 1979, when Victor Pecci lost in the finals to Bjorn Borg. Ranked 97th, Delgado upset the No. 1 seed, Pete Sampras in second-round action Tuesday. He advanced to the fourth round on Friday. The only other Paraguayan to play Grand Slams in the Open era was Francisco Gonzales.

• Heartbreaker: Anna Kournikova is breaking young hearts in Paris. On Wednesday, a group of enamored youngsters mesmerized by the 16-year-old Russian practicing was seen trying to drag one of their pals away. "Stop complaining, and take a last look," the group told their star-struck friend. "I can't! It's too hard. She's really too beautiful," he sighed.

• Faded Glory: Former Swedish champion Stefan Edberg roamed the walkways of the Roland Garros stadium this week virtually unnoticed. What a difference from the days when he couldn't set foot outside the players' lounge without being mobbed for autographs. Edberg came close to a French Open title in 1989, but lost to Michael Chang.

PARIS (AFP) — Fearless Serena Williams ruthlessly outplayed Dominique Van Roost to reach the last-sixteen of the women's singles at the French Open on Saturday — and then announced that she was the player to beat in her half of the draw.

"I'm the player they've got to beat...definitely," said the 16-year-old younger sister of eighth-seed Venus Williams, after staging an awesome 52-minute 6-1, 6-1 execution of the tournament's fifteenth seed.

"I don't have anything to lose. It's all on my opponents. I'm just going to go out there and do my best — which I know I can do very well."

Quite what her best is apparently remains to be seen.

Against Van Roost she was superb — all power, precision and confidence. But asked to give herself a mark out of ten she replied: "Well I lost a little focus — so I would say about six. And if you average out a mark after my first three matches, I suppose it would be two."

Certainly the one-sided loss was an unwanted 25th birthday present 24 hours early for the 15th-seeded Van Roost who had high hopes when she arrived in the French capital.

The Belgian player, who has climbed to a career-high 14th in the rankings after an excellent season which included a victory at Auckland, and a finalist's berth at Hobart, Paris and Linz, looked shell-shocked as she walked off court.

Rarely has an opponent stood so close to the service line to receive her serve or treated her own groundstrokes with such contempt. And Williams aggressive tactics clearly upset Van Roost who ended up serving six double-faults.

Serena, who wears her hair in beads like sister Venus and who, incredibly, is playing only her second clay-court event after her quarter-final run in Rome, now faces a first major test when she takes on twice-champion Arantxa Sanchez Vicario for a place in the quarter-finals.

The battling 26-year-old Spaniard, who triumphed here in 1989 and 1994 and

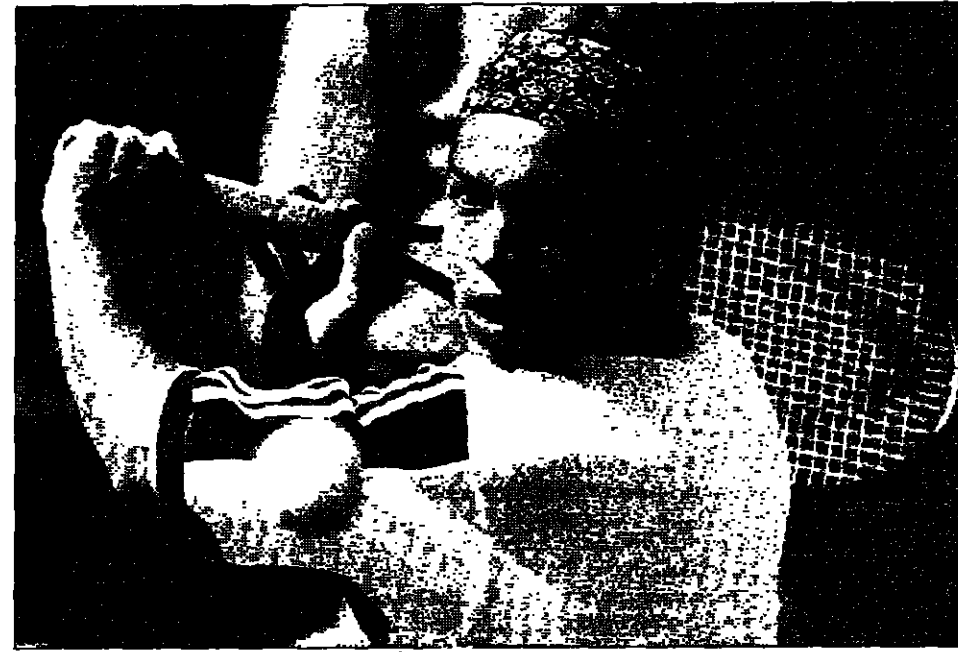
who is seeded fourth, overwhelmed French opponent Alexandra Fusai 6-2, 6-1.

"I have played a little bit better every match but obviously it is going to be tough against Serena," said Sanchez Vicario after her win.

"She has a very good serve and she hits the ball really hard. You have to play deep and make her run. If you leave her a short ball — she finishes it off really well. She has a lot of power."

Other players to reach a quarter-final showdown were defending champion Iva Majoli and seventh-seed Conchita Martinez.

Majoli, who scored a shock victory over Martina Hingis in last year's final, survived a tough second-set to beat plucky Mariana Diaz-Oliva of Argentina 6-2, 7-6 (7/2).



Hicham Arazi of Morocco in action during his match against Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina in the French Open at Roland Garros stadium May 30. Arazi defeated Zabaleta 6-4 0-6 6-4 7-6 (Reuters photo)

She now plays Switzerland's 19-year-old Patty Schnyder. Schnyder won her third-round match against Silvia Farina of Italy 6-2, 6-1.

Sandrine Testud, the last French survivor in the women's event, reached the fourth-round when she beat Gala Leon Garcia of Spain 6-1, 6-1.

She now faces second-seed Lindsay Davenport of the United States who took another step towards a scheduled showdown with World No. 1 Martina Hingis in next Saturday's final when she beat Elena Likhovtseva of Russia in straight sets.

The powerful 21-year-old American, who openly admits that clay is not her favourite surface, recovered after trailing 2-5 in the first set to score a 7-5, 7-5 win in 1hr 22min.

In the men's singles, Argentine qualifier Mariano Zabaleta, conqueror of World No. 2 Petr Korda in the opening round, saw his dreams of reaching the last-sixteen evaporate in Saturday's clummy heat when he lost his third-round match against Hicham Arazi of Morocco.

Arazi, a quarter-finalist when he made his French Open debut last year, beat

the 20-year-old former junior world champion 6-4, 0-6, 6-4 7-6 (7/3).

He now plays 16th seed Alberto Berasategui of Spain who reached the last 16 of the men's singles Saturday when he defeated Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia in four stamina-sapping sets.

Berasategui, a finalist here in 1994, won 6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 7-5, 7-5 in oppressive heat.

Cedric Pioline became the last home survivor in the men's singles when he beat former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek in straight sets on centre court.

Pioline, runner-up at Wimbledon twelve months ago, beat the tenth-seeded Dutchman 6-3, 6-2, 7-5 in 2hr 02min and now faces Russian qualifier Murat Safin who sent defending champion Gustavo Kuerten tumbling out of the French Open on Friday.

Safin defeated Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 7-5. The 18-year-old Safin, who also beat Andre Agassi in the first round, was once again able to rely on a big service.

He out-aced his opponent 11-6 in the 2hrs 29min match.



Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain returns a shot to Alexandra Fusai of France in the French tennis open at Roland Garros stadium. Sanchez-Vicario defeated Fusai 6-2 6-1 (Reuters photo)

And Martinez continued her impressive run by crushing fellow-Spaniard Virginia Ruano-Pascual 6-1, 6-0. Martinez, recent winner in Berlin and a semi-finalist at Bogota, has so far dropped only six games since the tournament began.

Spain's fast-improving 18-year-old Magui Serna, who ended Mary Pierce's hopes in the previous round, saw off last year's semi-finalist Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania 6-4, 2-6, 6-1.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

An international NGO is seeking to recruit an Early Childhood Programme Officer. Responsibilities of the post include planning and overseeing the implementation of early childhood programme activities. The applicants should have:

- BSc in Social Science or Education
- 1-3 years working experience with children under 12
- Good communication and problem solving skills
- Good organisational and planning skills
- Good computer skills (knowledge of Windows environment is preferred)

The applicants should be:

- A female
- Fluent in English and Arabic (both spoken and written)
- Dynamic and energetic
- Creative and innovative
- A team-worker

Applications should be sent to Fax No.: 4612902, Amman, by June 5, 1998.

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CHAIRMAN

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Chirac offers troops to secure Israeli pullout from Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — France is ready to provide troops for a multinational force to secure the Israeli-Lebanese border in the event of an Israeli pullout from southern Lebanon. President Jacques Chirac said here Saturday.

France is "ready, if the parties concerned request it, to take part, with others, in guaranteeing borders," Mr. Chirac told several thousand dignitaries at a ceremony officially reopening the French ambassador's residence here.

Mr. Chirac reiterated France's call for Israel to end its 20-year occupation unconditionally and in accordance with Resolution 425 approved by the U.N. Security Council in 1978.

"Israel must withdraw from Lebanon in conformity with Resolution 425 and without condition," he told the guests assembled for the reopening of the French ambassador's residence closed since Israel's 1982 invasion.

Israel last month said it now accepted the resolution but its withdrawal was conditional on receiving security guarantees from the Lebanese government.

Both Lebanon and Syria have said the condition makes a mockery of the resolution's call for Israel to withdraw "forthwith."

Mr. Chirac expressed support for Syria's demand for Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon to be treated as part of the wider Middle East peace process and not separated from the return to Syria of the Golan Heights occupied in 1967.

"As far as Lebanon and Syria are concerned, I am convinced that peace can only be based on a comprehensive agreement," the French president said, adding that Syria "is entitled to see the Golan Heights returned."

Earlier this week Mr. Chirac invited Syrian President Hafez Assad to make his first visit to France in 22 years.

But the French president added that once a comprehensive peace had been reached, there would be no rationale for the continued presence in Lebanon of the 35,000 Syrian troops currently deployed there.

"Once an Israeli withdrawal has taken place within the framework of a comprehensive peace," the Lebanese army, police and paramilitary forces must be "the sole guarantors of state authority" over Lebanon's entire territory.

"I am convinced that this new situation will then allow the Syrian forces to withdraw once peace has been fully established. Lebanon is entitled to its full independence, to its security and to the recovery of its sovereignty over the entirety of its territory," he said.

Mr. Chirac said Paris was convinced that the return of peace and security to Lebanon was dependent on the stability of the region as a whole.

"We know well that the condition for peace and security in Lebanon is that the whole region as far as the Gulf recovers its stability," he said, recalling that France had joined with Egypt

this month in launching "a solemn appeal for the relaunch of the peace process."

"France and the European Union, in coordination with the United States, will continue to be tireless militants for peace," he pledged.

Condemning "the vicious circle of provocations, lead-ins and despair," the French president urged: "Let us not give in to predictions of the imminent death of the peace process."

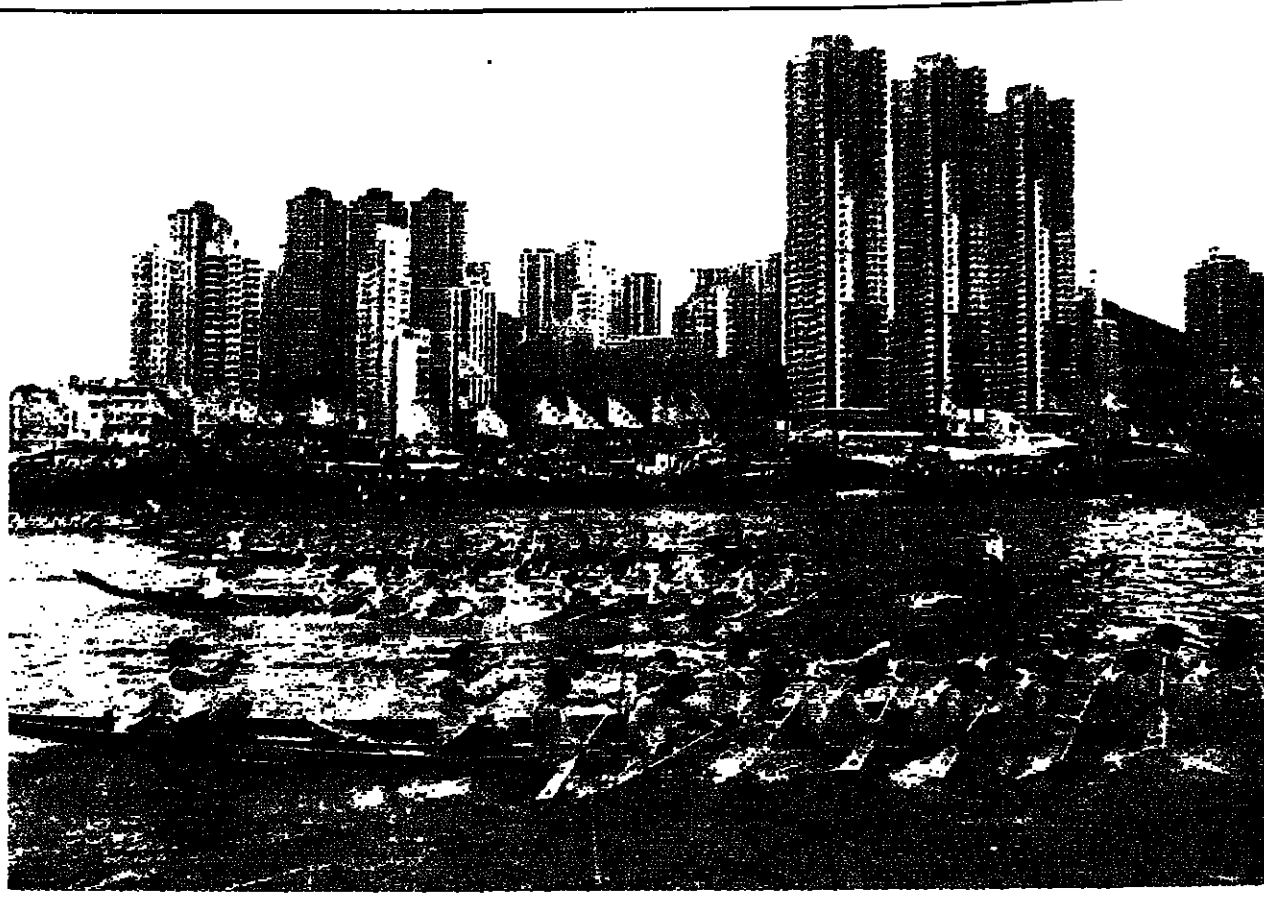
Some 4,000 invited dignitaries attended the ceremony during which Chirac formally reopened the historic Ottoman-style Residence des Pins of France's ambassadors to Lebanon.

He is making his third visit to Lebanon in just over two years — he visited the country during two previous Middle East tours in April and October 1996.

The French president has been crusading to strengthen his country's ties with Arab countries, choosing Lebanon — which was under a French mandate until independence in 1943 — as a "natural" gateway to the region.

In meetings Saturday with Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and House Speaker Nabih Berri, Mr. Chirac voiced concern over the peace process and prospects for a resumption of Arab-Israeli dialogue, a French spokesman said, adding that the president was "not optimistic."

On Sunday, Mr. Chirac is scheduled to open the International Association of Francophone Mayors' conference before returning to Paris.



PROTESTING GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION: Hong Kong rowing teams compete in one of many Dragon Boat races held around Hong Kong on Saturday to mark the Dragon Boat Festival. The annual festival commemorates Chinese poet-statesman Chu Yuan, who drowned himself in the Milo River in central Hunan province some 2,000 years ago, to protest government corruption (AP photo)

Arafat's cabinet to face no-confidence motion

By Wafa Amr
Reuters

RAMALLAH — The Palestinian legislature on Saturday gave Yasser Arafat's cabinet two weeks to respond to its queries on budgetary and administrative reform or risk a no-confidence vote for the first time.

"The majority of the council members have voted in favour of holding an extraordinary session on June 15 to discuss the budget and the relationship between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the council," said council speaker, Ahmed Qureia.

"There will be a discussion as well on holding a no-confidence vote."

The 88-seat council had convened in a continuation of a session begun on Thursday, when

22 members demanded a no-confidence debate.

President Arafat's cabinet has not faced a no-confidence vote since Palestinian elections two years ago.

The move reflects increasing grumbling by legislators over perceived foot-dragging by the PNA on political reform and alleged corruption and mismanagement.

"After several delays and attempts to solve the problems privately between the president and council members, it has become imperative to hold a no-confidence vote as soon as possible," said lawmaker Nabil Amr, from Fatah faction.

Mr. Arafat has promised legislators reforms and a cabinet reshuffle several times in the past.

He has ratified a few laws, but continues to delay approval of

some major legislation such as the draft constitution or basic law which limits the freedoms of the self-rule authority in charge of parts of the West Bank and Gaza.

Taking a step towards meeting the council's demands, Mr. Arafat ratified five major laws, including the civil service law, on Thursday.

"By ratifying the five laws, we can't say that the president is totally irresponsible to the council's wishes and resolutions," said legislator Ziad Abu Amr, an independent.

"This is a positive beginning, but the peaceful and democratic struggle between the two powers, the legislative and executive, will continue."

Lawmaker Saadi Al Krunz, an independent, said the legislature on May 11 had originally given the authority two weeks

to respond to the budget queries or face a no-confidence motion on May 26.

But he said Finance Minister Mohammad Zuhdi Al Nashashibi had replied to the council's questions and the lawmakers would discuss his answers at the session on June 15. "In the extraordinary session on June 15 lawmakers will raise all issues, not only the budget," Mr. Abu Amr said.

"They will talk about the laws which have not been ratified, resolutions which require the president to make reforms and changes which have not been implemented, and also the budget as well as the peace process."

Legislator Nabedh Al Rayes called in Saturday's session for the authority to get in step with the mood of the people.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aga Khan marries German princess

GOUVIEUX, France (AP) — The Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the world's Ismaili Muslim community, on Saturday married German-born Princess Gabriele zu Leiningen who converted to Islam, his office said. It was the second marriage for both. The two were married at the Aga Khan's estate, Aiglemont, in this small town 40 kilometres north of Paris near Chantilly in a Muslim religious ceremony and a civil ceremony, his secretary said. The rector of the Mosque of Paris, Dalil Boubakeur, performed the religious ceremony, and the mayor of Gouvieux, Patrice Marchand, performed the civil marriage, the statement said.

Yemen to submit BBC crew to questioning

SANAA (AFP) — The Yemeni authorities are to submit three BBC journalists accused of unauthorised entry to a tribal area to film the kidnappers of a British family to a three-day interrogation, court officials said Saturday. The journalists were detained on Tuesday for having "infringed on rules for journalists by going to a place where they were not supposed to go," British consul David Pearce told Agence France Presse. The journalists defied an order from the interior ministry not to travel to the region of the Beni Dabiyan tribe because of the risk they could also have been kidnapped, a tribal source said. They filmed members of the tribe which carried out the kidnapping and returned two days later to the capital, where they were detained at a checkpoint manned by armed troops, the source said.

Turkey plans retribution for French bill

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey is reviewing the full range of its economic and political ties with France after the French parliament adopted a bill officially recognising the "Armenian genocide," the Turkish press reported Saturday. An emergency meeting of top level officials in the foreign ministry in Ankara on Friday prepared a three-point retaliation plan, the daily Yeni Yuzuy said. The plan calls for diplomatic action, economic sanctions, and political pressure. Turkey's ambassador to France, Sonmez Koksal, presented a protest note to the French foreign ministry and is to continue lobbying the French Senate (upper house) to withhold its approval for the bill, the paper said, citing unnamed Turkish officials.

'Shalom' to Israel from Lebanon

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — "Hello Jerusalem, this is Beirut, shalom." Those six words marked what was hailed Saturday as the first radio broadcast by an Israeli journalist from Lebanon to the Jewish state since Israel's invasion 16 years ago. Guidon Kutz, who is accompanying French President Jacques Chirac on his tour of Lebanon, said he entered the country with a non-Israeli passport. "The French and Lebanese authorities, who knew I was Israeli, allowed me to broadcast direct from Beirut to Jerusalem," Mr. Kutz said. Lebanon, technically at war with Israel, bars entry to Israelis or anyone bearing evidence of a visit to the Jewish state.

Seven children killed at Turkish sand mine

ADANA (AP) — Seven children were killed Saturday by a landslide at a sand mine near this southern city, the Anatolia News Agency (ANA) reported. The children were buried under some 15 tonnes of sand, ANA said. Five children were pulled out alive. No other details were available.

D'Eainga meets Iranian FM

TEHRAN (AFP) — Former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing discussed ways to improve relations between Iran and Europe during talks here Saturday with Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi, state television reported. Iranian television quoted Mr. Giscard d'Estaing as saying that the "[moderate] positions of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami are monitored with interest in Europe." He added that his visit to Iran was "a clear sign of an improvement in relations between" Paris and Tehran. Mr. Kharazi was quoted as saying that Iran would "continue to follow a policy of détente" in its foreign relations. "Fair and mutual understanding is needed to improve our relations with Europe," he said.

Iranians to elect supreme leader in October

TEHRAN (AFP) — Elections for a key political and religious assembly in Iran which chooses — and has the power to oust — the supreme leader of the Islamic republic will be held in October, the interior ministry said Saturday.

The Council of Experts was first created in 1982 to choose a successor for the father of the 1979 Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, after his death, and universal elections are now held every eight years.

This year's elections, set for Oct. 23, have already triggered heated debate, particularly over pre-selection of candidates, between conservative supporters of current supreme guide Ali Khamenei and moderates and leftwingers who back President Mohammad Khatami.

In the last elections in 1990, a supervisory body dominated by the powerful conservative faction eliminated numerous candidates from the radical Islamic leftwing, including Mr. Khatami himself. But already, clerics close to Mr. Khatami have launched a campaign in several cities across Iran to prevent them from being ousted this time around and former parliamentary speaker Mehdi Karubi, an ultra-radical and supporter of Mr. Khatami, has called in an open letter for an end to pre-selection. In February, despite several political challenges to Mr. Khamenei's rule, the Council of Experts confirmed him in the post.

By Hassan Mekki
Agence France Presse

KHARTOUM — Farida Ibrahim, a Sudanese woman judge, is a pioneer of sorts in the Arab legal world, waging a relentless campaign against taboos that have kept women from becoming judges in most Arab countries.

"Arab women must be allowed to prove their competence in this area and dispel the illusions in Arab society that both a woman's indulgent nature and the Sharia [Islamic law] prevent her from becoming a judge," said Ms. Ibrahim, who will be 50 in October.

She points to trials in which she herself has handed down the death sentence as evidence that women can be as determined and inflexible as a man in rendering judgement.

"During a colloquium on the Arab woman and justice in

Sudan, Hamas issue joint call for Muslim unity against Israel

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese Speaker Hassan Al Turabi and Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin issued a joint call on Saturday for Muslim and Arab unity to confront Israeli "stubbornness" and support the Palestinian cause.

Sheikh Yassin arrived here on Friday on a tour of Arab and Muslim nations to gather support for the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which has waged a campaign against Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir in a meeting with Sheikh Yassin on Friday, expressed his Islamic-led government's full support for the Palestinian cause "until all usurped territories are liberated." General Bashir also praised Sheikh Yassin's "Jihad [holy war] efforts and Hamas's steadfastness in the face of Zionist arrogance," the official daily Jumhuria

reported Saturday. Mr. Turabi, who heads the Khartoum-based Popular Islamic Conference (PIC) which groups Islamic organisations, also stressed the need for Palestinian unity.

He and Sheikh Yassin called "for a unified Arab stance to confront the stubbornness of the Israeli government" and for Muslim unity, a PIC source told AFP.

On Friday the 61-year-old Hamas leader attended prayers at the Khartoum University Mosque where prayers leader Mutesim Abdul Rahim vowed that Muslims would recover Jerusalem from Jewish control.

"Mohammad's army has begun to move. The vanguards of this army are now assembling in Sudan," Mr. Abdul Rahim said. "Despite the military might of Israel and America, the Muslims will restore their rights."

Grindlays to pay Saddam's daughter \$30,000 in interest

By Ahmad Kreshan
and Isam Qadmani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — ANZ Grindlays Bank on Saturday announced that it will pay Rana Saddam Hussein, the daughter of the Iraqi president, and her family \$30,000 in interest on money deposited by her husband Saddam Kamel who defected to Jordan in 1995 and was killed together with his brother on their return to Baghdad.

The bank's vice-president, Rafiq Hariri, declined to reveal the amount of deposits in the bank but said they were not as large as was reported in the press. A senior government source said the question of the deposit was a personal one that did not require the intervention of the Central Bank.

Al Urdun weekly this week published photocopies of two documents one signed by Ms. Hussein authorising a Jordanian lawyer to settle her accounts with the so-called "South Asia organisation" registered in her husband's name and a warning from the lawyer to the bank to pay the interest on the deposits Hussein

Kamel and his brother Saddam, defected to Jordan in August 1995. Kamel had directed Iraq's weapons programme; Saddam Kamel had led a branch of the secret police after serving for sometime as President Saddam's bodyguard.

In Jordan, Gen. Kamel expressed a determination to topple his father-in-law, but found himself isolated by the West and even by Iraqi opposition groups.

The brothers eventually were promised safe return to Baghdad, and went there in February 1996.

They were killed during a gun battle lasting several hours with members of their Takriti clan.

The killings of the two men left many questions unanswered, including how much money the defectors controlled. Al Urdun, estimated these funds as high as \$1 billion. A number of Jordanian and Arab officials suspect the money is controlled by a network of Iraqi businessmen and friends of Gen. Kamel. "Nobody knows exactly how much money is out there," the New York Times quoted a Jordanian official as saying last week.

Sudanese woman fights Arab taboos against female judges

Cairo on May 5 to 7, I presented research demonstrating that the Prophet Muhammad gave women, already 14 centuries ago, the job of passing judgement in several cases.

"In addition, although a woman, I am considered in Sudan as being among those judges who strictly apply the law and I have already handed down death sentences," she said.

Sudan, in northeast Africa south of Egypt, is the largest country on the continent. It is a developing nation where famine is as much a killer as the war with southern rebels who took up arms 15 years ago to end Arabised domination of the mainly Christian and animist south by the Muslim north.

An authoritarian Islamist-backed military government seized power in a coup in 1989. But the precedent for women judges in Sudan was set long

before this, in 1965 when Sudan became the first among Arab nations to allow a woman to take on the job of a judge with the nomination of Ihsan Fakiri. Though she had the title, she never actually handed down a judgement in a court case. Today, out of Sudan's 750 judges, 76 are women, said Ms. Ibrahim.

Only Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia then Jordan in 1996 followed in Sudan's footsteps by allowing women judges. Of the 16 other countries in the Arab League, including Egypt which is the most populous Arab country, no woman have been named a judge.

Ms. Ibrahim — known in Sudan as "Mawlana" Farida, or Farida our mistress — became a judge in 1972. "I was nominated to the criminal court north of Khartoum where I examined evidence and delivered verdicts,

a first in the Arab World," she said. She moved through several posts before 1994 when she became a member of Sudan's federal high court, "the country's highest judicial authority," she points out proudly.

Not one to dwell on the negative, "Mawlana" Farida conceded that she had met with "a few difficulties" during her career, mostly from male colleagues who would not accept a woman boss.

"In the 1970s, when I presided over a court in Khartoum, one of the two member judges of this court who was among the group considered hardline tried to get my place, insisting his demand was backed up by the Sharia."

"But the chief justice, at the time Khalafallah Al Rashid, an enlightened man, rejected his demand as unfounded," she said.

"In general, women are well-

considered in Sudan, which may be one reason why no defendant or accused has ever demanded my removal throughout my entire career, either in the city or in the rural zones."

For this reason, the arrival in power in 1989 of the Islamist regime of General Omar Al Bashir "in no way affected the position of women judges," said "Mawlana" Farida.

"Today, five of the 70 members of the federal high court are women, a number we have never reached in the past." Married at 16 to a police officer well before she started her legal studies in Khartoum, Ms. Ibrahim is the mother of three daughters and a son. In addition to her court work, she has participated in two of the committees that helped draw up the draft constitution which the public voted on in a referendum this week.

Health warning: Viagra can seriously damage your marriage

NEW YORK (AFP) — A 63-year-old woman has filed a palimony suit against her 70-year-old common-law husband, claiming he left her for another woman after Viagra turned him into a horny stud, the New York Post reported. Roberta Burke said that thanks to the new drug she made love with Sonny Bernardo in early May for the first time in four years. But two days later he left her, she claims, after he told her it's time for me to be a stud again. Viagra, she told the Post, "ruined our marriage. At 70 I guess he figures he's going to party till he goes." Burke said she is considering suing the maker of Viagra "for failure to give notice that the drug could be dangerous to a marriage."

World's oldest African elephant dies of a broken heart

BASLE (AFP) — The world's oldest African elephant in captivity has died at the age of 49, apparently struck down by the grief of losing her mate eight days earlier, according to her handlers at the Basle zoo in Switzerland. Beira was found on the floor of her compound early Thursday in a listless state thought to have been caused by the death of Kenny, her 30-year-old companion who died of breathing problems May 20. After the failure of repeated efforts by firemen to get her back on her feet, the zoo issued a terse statement Friday saying it had been forced to put her out of misery.

Blair charms television audience with jokes

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair had a television studio audience in stitches when he revealed a hitherto unknown talent for comic timing. On ITV's Des O'Connor Show Blair told how Spanish Premier Jose Maria Aznar Lopez had to put up his wife and mother-in-law for three days during what was supposed to be a family Easter holiday when he was delayed in Britain by the Northern Ireland peace talks. "I finally arrived on Sunday about 2 a.m. and tell him, 'I don't know where we will find the time to discuss all the issues. He says 'Don't worry about that Tony — I have discussed it with your mother-in-law and we've sorted it all out'."

No blood spilt over World Cup

BORDEAUX (R) — The Bordeaux blood bank said it was installing television sets in all its blood donation centres so donors will not have to miss any of the action during the World Cup soccer championships. "It is obvious that the World Cup is going to disrupt our blood collections on days when there are matches," said Dr. Frederic Meunier, director of blood donations. "We could have a lot of defections."

New York theatre reinstates controversial play

NEW YORK (AFP) — The Manhattan Theatre Club said Friday it will reinstate Terence McNally's controversial religious play, "Corpus Christi," in the fall. The theatre's earlier decision to cancel the award-winning playwright's work because of protests by religious groups had sparked a firestorm of protest and accusations of censorship. The theatre's administrators had ordered the cancellation after it said it had received threats that the building would be burned to the ground, the staff killed and McNally "exterminated" if the play went ahead.